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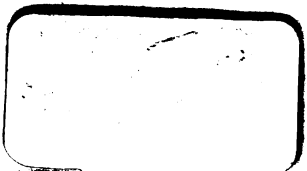

THE

CAUSES OF INFIDELITY

REMOVED.

BY REV. STEPHEN R. SMITH.

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PREFACE.

In presenting the following pages to the public, it may be proper to state that one of the principal motives of the writer, was to exhibit what he deemed the immediate causes of Infidelity. This, he was not aware, had ever been done. From nearly all who had written in defence of divine revelation, no such view of the subject was to be expected; as it involved the principles of their faith. And those, whose general views accord with those of the writer, had in their respective and excellent works, omitted to take this particular into consideration.

In the second part of the work, it was not intended to urge what had been so often and so ably done by many others. The principal object was to condense a series of proofs of a revelation, from sources not usually appealed to—and some of which were known to be regarded by unbelievers as entirely indefensible. The dispassionate reader will determine how far we have succeeded in repelling and turning back the assaults of Infidelity on those parts of the Bible.

It may not be improper to state here, what the reader will find repeated, that we have not always given authorities. We have, however, quoted none that we have not read—but sometimes from memory alone. And while we would render "honor to whom honor" is due, it was deemed unnecessary to make reference to every sentiment imbibed from others, when the language was our own.

Such as the work is, it is presented to an intelligent public, to which the author feels deeply indebted for many tokens of charitable indulgence, in various ways—with the fervent prayer that it may aid in removing the doubts of some, and in strengthening the faith of others, in divine revelation.

Albany, N. Y., June, 1839. S. R. SMITH.

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CAUSES OF INFIDELITY.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

That the questions—Is there a God? and if so, Do the Scriptures contain a revelation of his will, his purposes and our destiny? are the most important which can engage the attention of the human mind, seems incontrovertible. On them is suspended the propriety and the proper direction of the religious feeling—the brightest motives to a life of integrity and virtue, and the dearest hopes of the human heart. That the truth in relation to these subjects, though generally professed, is not always as well understood as might be desirable, admits of little question. Indeed, it is comparatively very recent, that any general attention has been given to the subject. The mass of mankind—the general reader, took no immediate part in its discussion. Its merits were the matters of consideration in a world above them—among the literati, polemics and theologians.

Several praise-worthy and very successful attempts have been made within a few years past, to bring the evidences of the truth of a divine revelation, more directly in reach of all classes

of society. Labored and standard works have been condensed, published in a cheap form, and thus rendered more generally accessible. Various new publications embracing all the common arguments, have also been added to the means of public information. Among these—those of Messrs. Pickering, Thayer and Williamson, deservedly hold a distinguished place. And from the size of their respective publications, as well as the familiar style in which they are written, they have probably reached the public mind, more effectually, than any other kindred productions.

The subject, however, is far from being exhausted; and the field is rather opened than fully improved. Not that new and unknown arguments, or proofs, remain yet to be adduced—but their bearings and results may perhaps be rendered more simple, more obvious, and their effects more certain. The probable, and perhaps manifest *reasons* of the popular infidelity* which prevails to some extent in our own country, may yet be better understood—and should be understood, for the same reason, that it is important to both physician and patient that the nature of the disease be well ascertained. The best medicines may otherwise be useless, or productive of little

* The terms "infidel," and "infidelity," are not used as words to convey reproach—they are only employed in the sense of "unbeliever, unbelief," and imply disbelief of the Bible and its doctrines.

benefit—while the disease is protracted beyond all reasonable duration.

The arguments and evidences in favor of Christianity have been abundant, and would, under other circumstances, have been satisfactory. But while Christianity itself, is unexplained, or so presented as to make all the finer and better feelings of the heart revolt at its forms or influences, the unbeliever will persist in its rejection. He may be convinced of the superior force of your arguments; but he will impute that conviction to any cause but the true one. He will not even suspect, that it is because you are right and he is wrong. He will impute his own failure to inattention, or want of skill—and will refer your advantage to greater learning, higher talents, or habits of controversy. Strip Christianity of the encumbrances and corruptions which ignorance, or superstition, or fraud has incorporated with it—let the unbeliever see, that instead of aspersing the character of a benevolent Deity, its nature, and principles, and requirements all harmonize with the best conceptions of the Divine nature—that all its doctrines are consistent and reasonable, its purposes benevolent, and its influences moralizing, and he will find new reasons for appreciating your arguments, and new motives for adopting the Christian profession.

The writer of this, has neither the vanity nor presumption to suppose that he shall perform the

work of simplifying the Christian doctrine, or rendering it more particularly acceptable to unbelievers. He aims to add his mite to the accumulating treasury of Christian knowledge, and to the proofs of the heavenly origin of the Gospel—to aid, if possible, in the diffusion of those great truths on which the moral well-being and happiness of his fellow-men so much depend, and to assist in removing the darkness and sorrows, which forever brood over the mind of the unbeliever.

Under the existing circumstances of the Christian world—such, in fact, as it has been for many centuries—it is rather a matter of wonder, that skepticism has been so rare, than that it has occasionally attracted attention, or numbered a few men of the first talents among its votaries. For to the most revolting dogmas, maintained by every artifice that power could employ, has been added a practice every way incompatible with a system designed for the moral improvement of mankind. The dispassionate looker-on is scarcely culpable for his doubts respecting the divine origin of a system so recommended. Nor is it matter of surprise, that these doubts have seldom been removed, when it is also recollected, that the skeptic, or unbeliever, has been treated as criminal, ignorant and obstinate—that he was avoided as an enemy, reprobated as a child of wrath, and denounced as a malicious disturber of the established

order of civil society. The most that can be expected from such a state of things, is a covert working and stealthy propagation of infidelity—a silent under-current sapping the very foundations of the visible religious fabric; and cautiously waiting its time of development. France saw and felt the horrors of that time—and probably other nations have escaped its terrors, by the nature of their institutions. With us, public opinion is free, and the unbeliever is invited, in common with the various sects, to the frank and manly avowal of his principles. And the consequence probably is, that while there are more known infidels among us, there are fewer in fact, than in almost any other Christian country.

In view of these general facts, the conviction has been forced upon the writer, that, with very few exceptions, unbelievers have not generally received the courtesies to which they were entitled. The harsh and contemptuous treatment to which they have been subjected, was neither politic nor kind. It has had great influence in preventing their attention to the subject of religion; and has neutralized the force and effect of many convincing proofs and conclusive arguments in favor of Christianity.

We have been much gratified, that our brethren who have preceded us in these investigations, have greatly improved upon the former method, with unbelievers. As men, they should not be

denied the usual privileges of men—to believe or disbelieve, without responsibility to man. And we have too much experience of the feelings and operations of human nature, to suppose that opinions of any kind are to be honestly abandoned or renounced, merely because they may provoke the disgust, the ridicule, or the reproach of others. Nothing in the form of coercion ever did, or ever can have any useful effect upon the mind of the supposed heretic—nor is there any good reason for believing, that its influence would be more salutary when tried upon the unbeliever.

It shall be our endeavor therefore, to lay before the unbeliever, a view of the prominent causes of his infidelity—to argue with him as a man—and to present him such motives and reasons for the belief of a revelation in general, and of Christianity in particular, that he shall do violence to his feelings, his reason and responsibilities to reject them. And we greatly err in our estimate of the plainest grounds of human conduct—if, when the true character of God is known, it is not loved—if, when the moral nature of man is duly appreciated, he is not thought worthy of the care of Heaven—and if, when the destiny of man is perceived, the unbeliever does not rejoice in becoming a Christian.

And as several doctrines and practices of certain Christian sects, will be examined, for the purpose of showing that they can not be maintain-

ed in an argument with unbelievers, it is deemed proper to apprise those concerned of the motives for so doing. It is confidently believed, that those doctrines and practices are the fruitful causes of that very unbelief, which all Christians are so desirous of removing from the human mind. Hence, what is supposed to be untenable and absurd in the creed of any class of Christians, will be frankly stated; and as far as consistent with our general plan, the reasons given for its rejection. Every candid Christian, of whatever sect, must feel that the attempt to maintain any opinion or usage, not clearly supported by the authority of the Bible, so far from serving, must injure the cause of truth and virtue. It will, therefore, constitute one part of our labor, and we trust not an uninteresting part, to show wherein certain views and practices are indispensable; and that, so long as they are maintained, it must be at the expense, both of reason and revelation. And it is hoped that Christian professors will exercise the candor which we all so much desire to see practiced by unbelievers—review their opinions, expunge from their creed every thing which is not authorised by the Scriptures, and which consequently does not admit of defence; and instead of the extravagances of fanaticism, practice the manly and purifying virtues enjoined by the Gospel. Let no one fear to do this. Christianity instead of suffering by the

process, will come forth in greater purity, and in a more amiable and interesting form. Reason and revelation alike approve of every honest endeavor to restore the Christian doctrine to its original simplicity, and to the full measure of its influence over the human mind.

In the arguments and proofs employed in the following series of articles, in vindication of a divine interposition, no attempt is made at originality. Most of the works in support of the Christian theology have been read—many of them, however, for the general purpose of becoming familiar with the subject, and to be able at all times to meet the objections of unbelievers, to whatever they related, and in whatsoever form presented. And as this has been done for a term of years, without any reference to the uses to which such acquisitions are now about to be applied; it would perhaps be impossible for the writer to give the proper credit in all cases. He may have imbibed unconsciously, many ideas, and even forms of expression, which have become incorporated with his own views and phraseology so intimately as no longer to be recognized by himself as borrowed. And as he has no desire to detract from the claims of others, or to use their favors without acknowledgments and gratitude, he will leave the reader to settle the right of property in all cases where no direct quotation is made. We are really more concerned in the ac-

quisition and spread of the knowledge of the Gospel, than in the question, whether the argument was first used by the facetious Berkeley, the indefatigable Lardner, the quaint and familiar Paley, or the interminable Chalmers. We would give "honor to whom honor is due," but would prefer being the humble instrument of imparting the belief, the temper and the hopes of the Gospel to but one mind, to the honor of being the author of more new ideas and arguments than any one man has now a right to claim.

But the question may perhaps arise—why so much solicitude on the subject of infidelity? why urge upon the public mind, the consideration of that particular subject? why persist in publishing book after book, and essay after essay, when nothing new can be expected as proof, and when the features and bearings of the arguments, scarcely admit of further modification? And above all, why call upon the unbeliever to read a number of works for which he has no taste?

There are at least *two* important reasons for doing these things—reasons that will continue to exist and be felt, while infidelity has a being; and such reasons as the unbeliever can never feel, nor properly appreciate. First—every Christian has full evidence—the evidence of his own experience, that the happiness of mankind greatly depends on their belief of the Gospel. And to the natural desire of seeing his opinions spread, and

become the favored theme of public faith, is added the sincere and ardent desire to remove the evils and promote the happiness of the human race. Faith in the Gospel, is among the most obvious and effectual means for securing these objects. And, secondly—if Christians remain silent on this subject, they leave the field open to an industrious and active enemy; the youth would want protection from the specious allurements which have been artfully thrown in their way, and many minds would sink in darkness and wretchedness which, by suitable attention, may be preserved in faith, purity, and peace.

That unbelievers are active in the propagation of their system—if system it is—will be perceived when it is observed that they have ranged almost every department of mind, and endeavored to meet it in all its ramifications, pursuits and employments. And they do this without any prospect of moral benefit, or hope of future joy; for the gratification of counting increasing numbers and spreading a useless theory. Thus merging every grade of character and every variety of condition in one common tomb, where mind and morals, and hope and joy are crushed beneath the weight of a pervading and withering unbelief! And can they wonder, that the Christian should be equally active—that those with holy and heavenly hopes should find equal, or even higher motives to exertion?

For however it may be doubted, the course pursued by unbelievers, justifies and calls for continued vigilance on the part of the friends of Christianity. Every grade of society is assailed, under some form, with efforts to wean them from the faith of the Gospel. From the courtly and insinuating sarcasm upon the page of standard history, through plain-dealing assertions spread over works of philosophy and physiology, down to the humblest means of science and the ordinary associations of business men, all furnish the means of urging doubts of the most important and interesting truths—and all means are employed to plant deeply the seeds of infidelity.

And for what benevolent purpose is all this machinery put in motion? What end is to be gained—what worthy motive consummated—by the propagation of infidelity? Will it make the world wiser? This can scarcely be hoped, when it annihilates some of the highest inducements to seek after wisdom—and when it is recollected, that many of the wisest of our race were Christians. Can it make men better? This will not be pretended—such a supposition is contrary to the experience of fact, the evidence of every man's senses. And that there are good and upright men among unbelievers, is no objection to this statement. There are innumerable examples of superior triumphs over temptations and death among believers. Will it make men hap-

pier? No one believes that it can do so. For there is no reason to suppose that the mere virtues of an unbeliever can impart a purer or a higher felicity, than those of the Christian. And it were preposterous, or insane to suppose, that to go down to the grave with no hope of future life, can make the death-bed as peaceful and happy as the prelibations of another and a glorious state of conscious being. What, then, is the probable motive? Evidently to carry a point—to witness the triumph of what many no doubt conscientiously maintain for truth, reckless of all consequences of "weal or wo" to mankind.*

But the Christian not only has different, but vastly higher motives for spreading the knowledge, and promoting the faith of the Gospel. He feels that his views are essential to the social, intellectual and moral well-being of his race. And that they are calculated to add dignity to wisdom, purity to the principles of the heart and the practices of the life, comfort and enjoyment, under every vicissitude of fortune, and peace and submission in death. He is assured, that to point out the way that leads alienated man back to his

* Perhaps another motive for the promotion of infidelity, may be found in the desire to eradicate certain opinions and practices, against which unbelievers have conceived dislike, or with which they have been disgusted; under the erroneus impression that thereby they should benefit mankind. G.

God, is to the religious feeling, what a message of kindness from a parent, is to a prodigal child. The Gospel directs the best and the holiest affections of the human heart, to their proper objects—concentrates them in gratitude and devotion to the Deity, and illustrates their uses and tendency in benevolence to man. It exalts, while it multiplies the reasons for a life of virtue, and it sanctifies that virtue with hopes as blissful as they are glorious and enduring.

This series of articles on infidelity, is not intended as part of a plan commenced in other recent publications, nor was it suggested by the appearance of those works. The attention of the writer had been drawn to the consideration of the subject some years since, from several causes —among these, the suggestions of several valued friends. And he had arranged the general outline, as well as the mode of publication, before it was known that any work on the same general subject was in contemplation.

The principal inducement to this mode of publication, was furnished by the certainty of placing the subject immediately in the hands of a much greater number of readers, than could be expected from any other method. For it is unfortunately too true, that the great majority of even general readers, have never been in possession of the usual arguments for a divine revelation. Their knowledge of the subject is principally derived

from the recollection of a few sermons, or an occasional article from the press. And what is thus gleaned is often rendered of little value, from the confused and indefinite impressions which have been retained.

To this mode of publication, there is but one important objection—it is, that the several essays must be extended to considerable length, which will deter many readers from undertaking the labor. But this consideration is at least balanced by the certainty, that all such readers must be reached in this way, or not at all; since those who would hesitate at a single chapter, would never commence reading a book.

CHAPTER II.

IMMORALITIES OF CHRISTIANS.

It may appear singular, that we should attempt to assign reasons for the conduct of other people—especially when that conduct involves some of the most intricate operations of the human mind. For such, the mental decisions respecting the truth and tendency of the Christian revelation, are generally considered. And it may, therefore, be viewed by some as a presumptuous undertaking. Those who thus judge, are informed, then, that nothing bold, daring or uncommon is intended. But it is very sincerely believed, that this subject—the causes of unbelief—has not received the attention which its importance merits, either from unbelievers themselves, or from Christian professors. And it will receive consideration for some little time, more from the desire of drawing upon it that portion of attention which it deserves—than from the hope that its discussion will be very agreeable, either to Christians in general, or to unbelievers.

Men sometimes act or decide on a given subject, much less from the weight of well under-

stood motives, than from the immediate influence of some impelling cause. And among the instances which might be adduced in illustration of this fact, there are few which appear more certain and obvious, than the existing infidelity among mankind. For it is difficult to conceive of any sufficient motive for unbelief, in the mind of any man. And surely no person is naturally an infidel, however indifferent or inattentive he may be to the interests of religion. The natural tendencies of the mind and feelings are to the belief in, and worship of some superior being—a fact abundantly proved in the practice of all nations, in every period of time.

We have used the term *motive*, in this instance, not with a view to reproach unbelievers for their opinions, or want of opinions, but rather to exonerate them from any improper designs in their adoption. For none can suppose, that merely to differ from the majority on the subject of religion, is an object of such importance as to furnish a motive for the disagreement. Nor can it be imagined, that to shut one's self out from the consciousness that there is a God, and from all the pleasures of devotion, and from the belief that he has made known his will to mankind, can constitute a motive for infidelity. Neither is it probable that the effort with which the religious feeling must be stifled in the human breast, furnishes such motive. Nor yet is it scarcely possible,

that the exclusive love of truth, ever led men into absolute unbelief. For unbelievers are not distinguished for the patient and deliberate examination of religious subjects. And were they ever to become so, there is good reason to believe that they would cease to be unbelievers. But admitting that there are no sufficient motives for infidelity, there still must be producing causes —what are they?

There are several prominent, existing causes of infidelity, which have their separate and distinct, as well as their collective influence. And to these particular influences may, perhaps, be traced the various aspects which unbelief assumes.

1. One cause of skepticism, is—*the imperfection of morality among Christians.* This is, in reality, a compliment to the purity required by the Gospel; and should have an effect exactly the reverse of the one named. For it is admitting, that if Christian professors were to live up to the principles and requirements of their religion, they would be far better than at present. And consequently, that those requirements are good. But this view of the subject, if taken, does not incline people to make any allowance for the imperfections and weaknesses of poor human nature—nor to look more favorably upon Christianity.

From the natural tendency of the human mind, principles and practices, if not absolutely identi-

fied, are, at least, very intimately associated. And as actions are more tangible than mere mental operations, and also usually esteemed more important, it follows that more stress is laid upon the conduct of men, than upon the principles of the mind. When, therefore, the conduct is vicious, the common inference is, either that the person is unprincipled—or that his principles are corrupt and vitiating. Hence some well-disposed persons are led to doubt the genuineness and utility of a system, which leaves its professors to the practice of vice. And the vices of nominal Christians, have been the stumbling-blocks that have turned many aside from the path of peace, into doubts, disgust and unbelief.

That much crime—nay, perhaps every variety in the catalogue of crime—has been committed by professing Christians, is neither to be doubted nor denied. From the most cruel and unrelenting wars, oppressions and persecutions, down to the lowest and the vilest of personal atrocities, there is probably not an offence against morality of which they have not been guilty. And while these facts have been the sources of deep mortification and sorrow to all good Christians, they have laid in other minds the foundation of an unnatural skepticism. That observation, however, which recognizes the abuses of the moral injunctions of the Gospel, is entitled to due consideration. And it should induce the believer to ex-

amine with great care, into the probable reasons of the previous and existing immoralities of Christians.

One obvious and important reason why the virtues inculcated by the Gospel, have not been more generally practiced, is—they have unfortunately been *undervalued* by Christians themselves. A state of things has existed—a system of opinions has prevailed, which has placed a false and exaggerated estimate upon mere belief; and which, consequently, rendered morality a subject of secondary consideration. Men believed, and still believe that the virtues are not of saving efficacy, but that faith and forms are; and consequently, that however good virtue may be in itself, it is not indispensable to salvation, and that the violation of its requirements may be atoned for, by the ceremonials of religion. Now, although these facts do not constitute an apology for crimes, still they do furnish reasons why the morality of Christians has not been better.

And these influences have been greatly augmented by other well-meant mistakes. Ministers have preached, and people have as constantly believed, that the practice of the Christian virtues was the sure way to render men miserable now, although it might secure their bliss hereafter. While, on the other hand, the pursuit of vicious indulgences has been very uniformly regarded and represented as the only true way of present

happiness. And it must also be recollected, that these views of the respective means of present happiness or misery, are deeply laid in the young and susceptible mind—grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength of successive generations. So surely then, as man loves happiness and would avoid misery, so certainly may we look for vices, while he supposes them the instruments of his present enjoyment. The operations of the natural laws of cause and effect, here exert a part, at least, of their wonted influence over the conduct of men. And the principles of the mind being corrupted—the moral feelings weakened and vitiated—it is no longer matter of surprise that strong and ardent passions should, in many instances, assume the right of control, and precipitate the believer into the very depths of crime and degradation.

But Christian morality has encountered other, and perhaps still greater discouragements. A hand, cold and palsying as that of death, has been laid upon the germs of human virtue; and apparently for no other purpose than their extermination. What else could have inspired the thought, or have prompted the earnest propagation of the opinion—that under that very condition in which man was introduced into being, he was wholly corrupt. That his best thoughts and purposes were sinful, and his best actions but "splendid crimes." That the affections of the soul were

polluted by an affinity with the first born of our race, and its final destiny would only be rendered more wretched by any attempts at moral obedience. That must be a hardy and well-rooted plant which can flourish, or even live under such cultivation. And yet, such is the care and culture which the Christian virtues have received for ages.

In view of all this, it ceases to be matter of surprise, that professing Christians have been guilty of crimes—or that under this head of discouragements, their morality should languish. Nor is it wonderful that some are tempted to doubt the heavenly origin of such sentiments—or even to question the divinity of a system of which they are supposed to constitute a part. At the same time, they fully account for the ridiculous and disgusting fact, that some persons are more devout than moral. And they should convince their advocates, that the sin of unbelief lies, in part at least, at their own door. While, on the other hand, the skeptic should be led to search for the causes which have prevented morality from wholly sinking under its burdens. And that it has not thus sunk, even among Christians, ought to satisfy him that there is a divine energy somewhere in the religion of the Gospel, and which secures among its professors, an overwhelming majority of candid and upright members.

It is then worthy of the attention and earnest consideration of the skeptic, whether the immo-

malities of Christians properly have, or can have any bearing upon the credibility of the Gospel. They are the subject of deep regret to every well-wisher to Christianity, as well as of pain to the philanthropist. But still, it is not a little extraordinary, that with the acuteness of vision possessed by unbelievers, they should be able to perceive little in the Christian character except offences. Nothing else is clearly and distinctly seen; and this is very certain to be first seen and made the subject of animadversion. And this, notwithstanding the notorious fact that, in every Christian community, of every age and sect, the offenders against the ordinary rules of morality, are comparatively few in number. While, on the contrary, no one class of men on earth, have furnished so large a proportion of those who may justly be considered the ornaments of human nature. The catalogue of those who have shone pre-eminently in their respective spheres, as the benefactors of mankind, and as illustrious models of moral purity, is immensely too great to admit of enumeration. While millions in humble and private life, have carried out into full practice the benevolent principles of a pure and heavenly morality. Nor need we search the records of bygone days, nor go abroad for examples: they are to be found every where around and among us, in the lives of the thousands and tens of thousands of Christian worshippers of almost every name,

And we beg leave to press the question—why these things are never considered by skeptics, as well as the faults of Christians? Why that morality, which has triumphed over so many discouragements—diffused so many meliorations over suffering humanity, and so greatly improved the moral condition of society—should seem to be overlooked, or disregarded?

The unbeliever would consider it unmanly and unfair, to charge the follies or vices of a few individuals of his fraternity, to the weakness or corruption of his system. And he would, with great propriety, demand that the virtues of other members should be taken into the account. This indulgence we must give him, or his system would fall at once. For it is not yet well ascertained, that skepticism, or infidelity, professes to improve, or that it was ever known to improve the morals of any man. And this indulgence we are willing to grant—but we claim what we give, with the fullest confidence in the superiority of Christian morality over every other system that ever claimed the attention of mankind; the opinions of skeptics, and the acknowledged vices of professors, to the contrary notwithstanding.

We deny, then, that the views of the nature, imperfection and uselessness of morality, which have been here stated, are any part of Christianity. And we demand as our privilege, that the unbeliever give so much attention to the subject, as

may enable him to distinguish between the corruptions of Christianity, and its pure and primitive principles as taught and exemplified by the Saviour and his apostles. This he can do at a small sacrifice of labor and attention, and this he is bound to do before he takes for granted, that any set of opinions are the same with those maintained by the New Testament. He should know, by a candid examination of the subject, whether the utter worthlessness of moral virtue is a doctrine of Christianity, or one of its corruptions—and reflect, that the malpractices of erring man, are no proof that his faith is ill-founded, or that the confidence of his hopes is unjustifiable. And if he does not do this, but rejects unceremoniously the whole system of Christian revelation, as doubtful or untrue, he must assure himself that others will suspect him of having more zeal to escape from error, than industry in ascertaining where the error lies.

Let the unbeliever go to the New Testament, and he will learn that Jesus taught his followers to practice a better righteousness than that of the Scribes and Pharisees—the great religionists of his nation—and that he exemplified in his own practice the nature of the virtues he required. From the same book he will also learn that the apostles required of the first Christian converts, a departure from all iniquity, and that they should keep themselves unspotted, unpolluted from the

world. They thus not only enforced an entire and pure morality, but they denied the name and the privileges of discipleship to all those who disobeyed their injunctions. From whatever cause, then, the immoralities of professors may proceed, that cause is not found in the precepts of the Gospel, or in the example of the first propagators of Christianity.

He, therefore, who allows himself to doubt of the truth of divine revelation in general, or of the Christian religion in particular, because some Christians undervalue morality, and therefore do not most effectually promote its practice—or because, from erroneous views, or human frailty, others fall into crimes—does one, or all of the following things.

1. He permits himself to judge hastily and on insufficient evidence, when the means of full and ample information are in his hands. And he does this, because he takes but a very partial view of the subject. This no one can doubt, who recollects that he doubts the truth of Christianity, or rejects it entirely from the single consideration, that some of its professors are immoral. The virtues of other Christians ought certainly to be esteemed as good evidence in favor of its moral tendency—especially when the number of the virtuous greatly exceeds that of the vicious; and when that evidence is supported by the visible fact, that

where Christianity has prevailed, the morality of mankind has been uniformly improved. Or,

2. He identifies the opinions of a certain body of professors, with the thing professed, without ever instituting a comparison between them. This the unbeliever or skeptic generally does, by taking for granted, that the opinions respecting the moral depravity of man—the sinful tendencies of his actions, and the worthlessness of virtue, are the identical doctrines and teachings of the New Testament. This has been shown to be incorrect, and we have a right to expect that he will at least examine both sides of the question before he draws his conclusions. Else,

3. He betrays an indolence which he will not excuse in others, and judges by rules which he condemns. For he would not trust for a moment, the credibility of his views upon the moral conduct, or moral requirements of the sternest advocates of infidelity; nor allow the Christian to be a competent judge of the merits of a book which he had never read.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

It is far from being an agreeable reflection, to feel compelled to grapple with two adversaries at one and the same time. Yet there are connexions and relationships of such a nature and character, that you can never disagree with one of the members, without involving a controversy with the whole family. Such is our present predicament. There is an affinity so intimate, between the existing infidelity, and the corruptions of Christianity now strenuously maintained by a large majority of professing Christians, that it is believed to be utterly impossible to do justice to the former, without giving offence to the latter. It is matter of consolation, however, that if those corruptions can be removed, the skepticism and unbelief which have been built upon them, will want their present foundation; and many Christians gain a more intelligible and consistent faith. To aid in effecting these objects, is believed to be worthy of more exertion, than has, at all times, been employed by those who have seen and deplored its necessity.

A second reason for skepticism or infidelity, is undoubtedly to be found in certain *doctrines* ranked among the fundamentals of the Christian church. These are, and have been very nearly the same for some fourteen or fifteen centuries; whether considered as appertaining to Catholics or Protestants. The first of these in order as well as importance, is the favorite doctrine of the trinity—the actual existence of three distinct and equal persons in the Godhead.

There is something so revolting to reason, so repugnant to all our ideas of number and consistency, in this prevailing dogma, that it is matter of wonder—not that so many, but that so few, comparatively, reject the whole system of which this is supposed a part. For it plainly involves, not only the palpable absurdity that three are one, and one is three, but several others of similar character and equal importance to the simplicity of truth. It supposes that one, separately and individually, is equal to all three—and three, only equal to one. It also supposes that, however they may differ from each other as individuals, they are yet precisely and eternally alike—that though one may be a son and another a father, neither existed prior or subsequent to the other—and that while one is exclusively just, and another merciful, yet they are alike merciful and just.

Now it certainly ought not be considered marvellous, that a system including such opinions,

or supposed to embrace them, should be rejected as erroneous; or that those who have not been at the pains to ascertain, or are not disposed to perform the labor of ascertaining whether the Bible inculcates such opinions, should treat the whole as a miserable piece of jugglery, designed by its mysticism and unintelligibility to impose upon the ignorant. And it must be confessed, that few things could be devised, more effectually calculated to drive men into infidelity. Such has doubtless been its tendency in the minds of thousands; while others have bowed their reason before it in patient submission, and confessed their inability to understand its nature, or to explain its principles.

However absurd men may sometimes be, there is yet a general disposition to appear consistent. And if we make a few exceptions, they commonly are so, as far as their means will allow. And strange as the fact may appear to some, there is a tendency to consistency even in matters of religion. This is demonstrated by the splendid labors and success of the reformers, and the repeated attempts at innovation upon antiquated systems. But in some instances, of which the doctrine under consideration furnishes an example, this tendency is counteracted by special considerations. For there is probably not a living man who would be a trinitarian, if left unmolested to the formation of his own system of theology—a

probable fact, that would by no means diminish the number of sincere Christians.

But Christian professors, so far from being permitted to determine this subject for themselves, have in some sense, been compelled to adopt that doctrine, however revolting to their reason. The strength of the religious feeling induced them to make the profession of its belief, when they could not reconcile their understandings to its singular absurdities. They were religious themselves, and desired the communion of kindred worshippers; and in order to obtain this privilege, yielded up their ideas of consistency on the altar of the standard doctrines of the church. But there is every reason for believing, that could the blessings of social and Christian fellowship have been as certainly obtained and as fully enjoyed without assenting to the doctrine of the trinity, its profession had never been made. And this, without impeaching the purity of the motives, or the sincerity of the profession and conduct of a single individual of the vast multitude of trinitarian worshippers.

We do not stop here to parley with the unbeliever, for flying off in a tangent from Christianity, because he found this doctrine of the tri-personality of the Deity in the hands of its professors. At present, our business is with the fact, that it is considered a constituent of the Christian doctrine—why and how it has been transmitted down

to our own times, and what causes still operate in its perpetuation. The same causes, in general, which have operated in the transmission of this dogma through successive ages, for about fifteen hundred years, are yet exerting their influence in its preservation for some time to come. Yet as certainly as truth is mighty—as that superior means of investigation prompt their more effectual use—so certain will the time come when it will be expunged from the symbols of the church; and one God, in one person, will be every where acknowledged and adored by the professing Christians. The skepticism to which it has given rise, will then cease to be, and one new reason exist for the conversion of the unbeliever to the virtue, peace and hopes of a consistent system of religion and a Heaven-derived Gospel.

It need scarcely be said, that, for many ages, men were literally compelled by the application of human laws—and secular laws too—to profess the doctrine of the trinity. And that these alone were sufficient to fix that, or any other system of views, in the public mind so firmly, as to secure their transmission from age to age, while the state of civil society would permit such laws to exist. They gave the first impulse to the doctrine in question, which diffused it over the Roman empire—not without opposition, but with final success. The familiarity of habit, the want of means by which to institute and carry on a full and satis-

factory examination of the subject, and sundry other causes which continue their respective influences, secured and perpetuated the triumph of an opinion which began its reign in contention and blood.

1. Among the more prominent of these causes, we may reckon the direct influence of public opinion over the great mass of mankind. It seems to be presumed that the majority in such matters, must be right—and that what is generally believed, and has long been believed, must of course be true. This is congenial with the extreme unwillingness evidently felt by mankind, to perform the labor of ascertaining the truth by personal investigation. Hence they too commonly acquiesce in public opinion, on the supposition that competent persons have, at some time, ascertained in a satisfactory manner, the truth of the subject in question. How much the doctrine of the trinity owes to this consideration, alone, we presume not to determine. But it is not difficult to perceive that those who profess it on this ground, and those who reject Christianity because that doctrine is maintained by its professors, judge and act from nearly the same reasons—because neither class has examined the subject!

2. Others, again, adopt and profess the doctrine of the trinity, because they have perfect confidence in their religious teachers. They are fully assured of the learning and talents of their spi-

ritual guides—that they have devoted the labor of their lives to the study of the Scriptures, and that they could have no sufficient motives to deceive themselves, or to impose upon mankind. And they therefore consider it safe to believe the doctrine, though they never expect to understand it themselves, nor to be able to explain it to the understanding of others. The feeling of inconvenience to which this subjects them, is allayed by the satisfactory assurance, that there are those who see through, and can explain the subject in a clear and convincing manner. These teachers, in the mean time, may in turn argue in much the same way; and may consequently be as conscientious in propagating, as their hearers are in believing what neither can explain or fully understand.

3. Another reason why this doctrine maintains its ground in the Christian church, is, that it is considered a sacred subject, and must not be examined. That there is a sort of impiety in calling in question the verity of so ancient and well-established a doctrine of the church; and that he who should dare do this, would jeopardise his religion here, and his happiness hereafter. It is not difficult to conceive the terror and dismay with which these considerations would strike the hearts of many candid and upright men; nor the expedients to which they would resort, rather than hazard the visitation of such alarming con-

sequences. And though compulsion is a strong term when so applied, it is probably very near the meaning of that certain something, which controls the profession of men so circumstanced.

4. Another consideration which has great weight in enforcing assent to the dogma of the trinity, is, the almost universal impression that if it be not a matter of reason, it is one of revelation; and that revelation may require the belief of any position, however repugnant to reason. The influence of this belief, has been further strengthened by the equally general opinion, that human reason has become so monstrously perverted in consequence of sin, as to be wholly insufficient for determining the propriety or impropriety, the truth or falsehood of any subject appertaining to religion. Hence, the wise and the unwise, the learned and the ignorant are alike deterred from reasoning on the trinitarian hypothesis, from a fastidious diffidence of the capabilities of the human mind to grapple with a subject so much above its powers of comprehension. The whole subject is therefore resolved into one grand and indefinable mystery, and to be received as such, because no finite powers can fathom its profundity.

Such are the prominent reasons why the singularly absurd doctrine of the trinity, not only has been believed, but continues to command the assent of a large proportion of the Christian world.

Its rudiments were laid in the philosophical opinions of some of the early Gentile converts to Christianity: and it was superinduced upon the doctrine of the Gospel from the very natural desire, while that was unpopular, of rendering it respectable in the eyes of the world—hence it was invested with the machinery of an ineffable mysticism, and the celestial splendors of a trinity of divine persons. Ecclesiastical authority, aided by the strong arm of the civil law, enforced a general acquiescence in its supposed or assumed truth, and habit, and the reasons above assigned, sustained its orthodoxy through successive generations.

But the trinity was never a doctrine of the Bible—and but a very small number of passages from that book could ever, by any possible effort, be pressed into its service. And of that few, there is not one which does not, without violence, admit of a totally different meaning and application. It would be an abuse of time, and of the patience of the reader, to introduce the proofs of these facts in this place. It is sufficient for our present purpose to say—that the Bible knows but one God; one mediator, the man Christ Jesus; and one holy spirit of truth and grace. This we are required to believe, not merely because it is matter of revelation, but because it is also consistent with the dictates of sober reason.

It is denied, therefore, that this absurd dogma constitutes any part of Christianity—it can be

spared from the fabric without disturbing a stone of the original structure. Nay, more—its entire removal would be like taking an earthly incrustation from the diamond, and allowing it to display its native brilliancy and purity. Nor can it reasonably be supposed that it was originally a part of the Christian system, so long as that claimed an adaption to the human mind under all its varieties and gradations of knowledge. For none can presume, that the doctrine of the trinity is a subject of very easy apprehension. The most capacious intellects sink under the effort, and acknowledge their inability to comprehend or explain its nature.

But the infidel seems never to know that this doctrine is not one of Christianity. He has never been at the trouble to compare it with the doctrine of the Bible, from which it is professedly taken, but takes the existing opinion as a legitimate part of the great economy of divine revelation. In this he imitates the most passive believer in the trinitarian hypothesis, and places implicit confidence in the discernment and fidelity of its teachers.—A fact, of which he is probably not aware, and which should teach him more charity for those whom he sarcastically denominates a priest-ridden multitude, and reproaches with being blindly led by the nose. It is difficult in such a case, to determine which betrays the greater blindness—he who adopts, or he who rejects a system without

examination. Whichever it may be, one thing is certain and apparent—they are alike ignorant of the facts on which they ostensibly found their respective determinations. And the claim of either to superior discernment, is equally preposterous, since the views of both are the result of any thing rather than knowledge.

This, however, is not the view which the unbeliever takes of the subject. He conceives himself a philosopher, and fancies that great deference is due to his judgment, because he has detected one or more absurdities in the doctrine of the trinity. And is this all—really all that he has done? No—he has on the strength of his discovery, become—not a more enlightened and rational Christian, as he should have done, but an infidel! He should have known, that the discovery of absurdities in that doctrine amounts to nothing; for there is probably not a believer of it in all the Christian world, who ever thought it reconcilable with the deductions of reason.

Admitting, then, what is perhaps not to be denied, that the unbeliever has been made so by the doctrine of the trinity; still there is little merit in seeing difficulties in a system which are seen more or less clearly by every one. The only important difference is, he rejects not only that doctrine, but Christianity with it—while some believe in the Gospel without that dogma, and others maintain both together. And we can not but think that

system built upon a very unstable foundation, which rests upon the single consideration of the impossibility of the truth of an absurd theory, when that theory, whether true or false, can not affect the truth of the subject in dispute. Infidelity, so far as based on the doctrine of the trinity, appears to be founded on a mistake—and it is not easy to see how a system can be true, when its premises are false.

We do not blame the unbeliever for rejecting the doctrine of the trinity—but the vast importance of the subject, should induce him to examine with great care, whether that doctrine is any part of divine revelation. And that the subject is important, every one must perceive and feel, who reflects that the direction and improvement of the religious feeling, the highest and most worthy motives to the practice of virtue, and the hopes and comforts flowing from the belief in a future state of glory and felicity, depend on the belief or disbelief of Christianity. He therefore who rejects the Christian system, because, in the process of ages it has received the addition of a few human devices, acts much like one who should refuse an ancient gold coin, because its pristine brightness had been observed.

CHAPTER IV.

OF ATONEMENT.

Next to the doctrine of the trinity in importance, is that of atonement. The one being, in fact, indispensable to the other, according to prevailing opinion. For if it were necessary that such an atonement should be made, as is commonly supposed, it is certain that nothing less than a Deity could accomplish the work, or make the sacrifice. And yet such sacrifice, could it have been requisite to vindicate the Divine justice and secure the everlasting salvation of the human race, would furnish one important reason why some persons must reject it, and thereby fail of ever receiving its benefits. For unless some more consistent view of the divine economy should win them to the faith of the Gospel, they must fall into irreclaimable infidelity.

In view of these consequences, we venture to urge the claims of the doctrine of universal salvation in reference to this subject, upon the attention of unbelievers, as well as upon that of believers in the common doctrine of atonement. It appears to the writer, that Universalism comes in

between the prevailing infidelity and the popular plan of atonement, as a reconciling spirit—making peace where perpetual discord reigned, by winning one party to consistency and the other to the obedience of faith. For while it ascribes to Jesus the office of mediator, it supposes that the Deity sent him—not to avert the wrath, but to commend the love of God to man—not to endure punishment in our stead, but to impart to us the true knowledge of God, and lead us to the practice of virtue, that *we* might no longer deserve chastisement. Universalism does not interpose the Son of God between the divine justice and our final destiny; but makes him the distinguished instrument of teaching us how to comply with the requisitions of eternal equity, and thereby enabling us to enter upon a present salvation by ceasing to sin, and to enjoy a present heaven in the hope of a glorious immortality. In one word—it maintains that atonement consists, not in reconciling God to man, but man to God.

The common doctrine of atonement is simply this—man by transgression had incurred a debt of infinite and endless suffering, to divine justice. This debt it was impossible for him to pay—this suffering he could not endure, and yet be saved. Jesus Christ, therefore, being equal with the Father in wisdom, power and eternity, interposed, took upon him our natures, suffered the penalty of our sins, satisfied the demands of offended and

violated justice in our stead; and now claims for his own, all those whom God gave him in the covenant of redemption. Hence by this system, those who are the subjects of atonement and consequently of salvation, are exempted from the just punishment of their sins.

This doctrine is liable to very serious charges for its palpable tendency, as well as to insurmountable objections on account of its inconsistency. And it has probably exerted its full share of influence, in driving men into skepticism or open infidelity. And this, not because it is more absurd than the doctrine of the trinity, or than some others which will be hereafter considered—nor yet because it has less foundation in the Scriptures; but because it is so often dwelt upon, and thrust forward as the all of grace, and the only substantial basis of Christian hope. From the perpetual and great stress laid upon it, one might imagine that it was a paramount object to render the subject so familiar to every mind, that its cruelty and absurdity should be overlooked. Just as intimate acquaintances become insensible to each other's defects, or imperfections.

There are several considerations growing out of this doctrine, which must strike the mind of every reflecting person, as especially incompatible with the character of God, and inconsistent with the plan of his moral government.

1. It supposes that the actual sufferings for sin—infinite sufferings too—are not endured by the guilty who deserved them, but by the supremely innocent Son of God. This is a sad reflection upon the character of the Deity, because it implies that it is a matter of perfect indifference to him, and to the moral attributes of his nature, and to the principles of his administration, who suffers, so long as the whole amount of punishment is endured. It would seem impossible that any man could be serious in thus traducing the divine character, if we had not abundant evidence to the contrary, every where around us, and before our eyes. But how men can permit themselves to ascribe to their heavenly Father, a degree of cruelty which they would never once think of ascribing to man, bad as he is, it is not easy to determine. And should any man endeavor to carry out this doctrine in the government of his family, and punish an innocent and unoffending child instead of the disobedient, the most tenacious believers in its truth would, no doubt, be among the first to exclaim against its absurdity and cruelty.

As the Father of mankind, we can not suppose the Deity indifferent to the influence of his moral government over them. Hence, also, it can not be inferred with any show of propriety, that when punishments must be inflicted, he is indifferent on whom they fall. For as the administrator of eter-

nal equity, he must have motives for the infliction of chastisements which, it may be presumed, might render it inconsistent to punish one in place of another, and especially, one for all. But if there were no obstacles in the way of consistency and propriety, on the supposition that punishment is inflicted on the innocent instead of the guilty and deserving, so far as the Deity, himself, is concerned; still there is at least some difficulty, in reconciling such a course of discipline, with our notions of strict and impartial justice. The nature and principles of justice are eternal and immutable. And they are the same in character, however they may differ in degree, both in God and man. If, then, strict justice in all reason demands the punishment of the guilty—and none but the guilty—on what principle of equity can the innocent be punished, and the guilty spared? Certainly in the eye of reason, this is even more cruel and unjustifiable than those petty inflictions of capricious tyranny, which involve the innocent and the guilty in the same condemnation.

Now, the unbeliever considers it a matter of perfect indifference, as far as equity or consistency is concerned, whether this plan of punishing the innocent for the guilty, be pursued by God or man. And he does, and will regard it in the same light, when falling on the head of Jesus according to the popular doctrine of atonement, as every man would view it when inflicted on an innocent child

by a mistaken parent. And however we may regret that such views drive him into the regions of infidelity, it can never be matter of surprise, that his judgment and feelings revolt at the representation which they give of the character of God and the nature of his justice. And he has been led to identify the doctrine of atonement with the truth of divine revelation, by the common consent of the Christian world, which maintained that it was a part, and a very important part of the plan of the Gospel. He therefore rejects the whole, as a barbarous delusion. Such is the conclusion which many have drawn respecting the subject—and such it will continue to be in too many instances, while the common doctrine of atonement is maintained.

2. But this is not all—the belief that the wicked, who are the subjects of atonement, are not, and never will be punished adequately for their sins, has plainly an immoral tendency. Far be it from us to contend, that the believer of this doctrine is necessarily a bad man. We know many of its advocates, whose morality would do honor to a much more consistent theory. But there are those whose natural dispositions are less favorable to virtue, and who will avail themselves of the license furnished by this doctrine, to outrage morality under the expectation of impunity.

It has been already intimated, that among the obvious reasons why Christian morality is so de-

fective, may be reckoned the influence of the doctrines believed. This one of atonement, seems especially calculated to yield that kind of moral liberty, under which hypocrites may perpetrate iniquity without fear of retribution. For however severe they may suppose the punishment of unbelievers, they still maintain that the sins and the merited chastisements of believers are remitted—being imputed to Jesus, who suffered for them on Calvary. They also maintain, that however deeply the believer may involve himself in sins, or however frequent may be his indulgence in them, he is still considered righteous on account of his faith. If this is not offering high inducements to sin, we know of no consideration which could tempt men to transgression. And could Adam in paradise, have understood and believed the modern system of atonement, he would scarcely have needed the aid of the serpent to secure his fall.

Besides, unlike every doctrine and precept of the Gospel of truth, the more firmly this doctrine is believed, the more vitiating and corrupting will obviously be its influence. And as many have believed, and still do believe it, with the full conviction that to do otherwise were to peril the soul, there can be no doubt, that it has appeased the anguish of many a guilty conscience, by the assurance, that the Son of God absolves them from all punishment, by the substitution of his own sufferings. But men of warm temperaments and

strong passions, should not be too severely tried with allurements to sin; and we can not but hope that the advocates of the common doctrine of atonement, will reconsider their system, and without sinking into infidelity, find more purifying principles in the Scripture doctrine on that important subject.

That the common doctrine of atonement is not taught in the Bible, will appear from the following considerations.

1. At the time when the death of Christ first began to be considered as a proper sacrifice—that is, as a *substitute* for the punishment of fallen men—the advocates of that theory were greatly perplexed to determine to whom the atonement was made. It certainly did not enter into their minds, that the *justice of God* required, or that the Deity could receive the sufferings of Jesus as a proper substitute for those of guilty man. The most distinguished fathers of the church, concluded, therefore, that the sacrifice was made to the devil—the great adversary of the human race. And they argued thus—if mankind, by trangression, had sold themselves to the enemy, *the price* of their redemption should, of right, be paid to him by whom they were held in bondage. Ridiculous as this opinion is, it possesses one feature far less offensive than the common view of atonement—it ascribes the demand for a vicarious sacrifice, to a

being whose *character* will not suffer in consequence.

Now, if the Scriptures had authorized the common view of atonement, those early Christian fathers could not have entertained the opinion, that the sacrifice and sufferings of Christ, were made to any other than the Deity. All the present elements of the popular doctrine on this subject, were then laid. Christ was supposed to step in between the claim for punishment, and the victim on whom it was to fall—and to endure the sufferings which human nature could not, and yet be saved. Hence, the only important difference between the theory above given, and the prevailing doctrine of atonement, consists in the supposition that the sacrifice was made to a very different being. And it must be evident, that if the Bible had stated any thing definitely respecting a vicarious atonement, so important a part as that which related to the recipient of the sacrifice, would not probably have been omitted. This consideration should induce its present advocates to reconsider the subject, with great attention.

2. Another reason for believing that the Scriptures do not teach the common doctrine of atonement, is contained in the fact, that they *do teach* what is absolutely incompatible with that theory. Thus, instead of so much as insinuating that Christ came to appease his Father's wrath, they expressly assert that he was sent because God

loved the world. Neither is it a Scripture doctrine, that divine justice required a kind or degree of punishment of man, which was in any sense inconsistent with his salvation; or that the death and sufferings of Christ were necessary, in order to make it just for God to save sinners. On the contrary, they are wholly silent on that subject. The Bible is also entirely silent respecting saving us from punishment; but it represents Christ as bearing away our *sins*, as a physician does our diseases—not by assuming, but by curing or removing them. Finally, instead of teaching that mankind are exempted from punishment because Christ suffered, the Bible asserts in a great variety of intelligible forms, which neither admit of misapprehension nor evasion, that every man shall suffer for his own sins, and according to, or in proportion to their demerit.

In view of the foregoing objections to the common doctrine of atonement, and the certainty that the Scriptures teach a very different system respecting the mission, labors and sufferings of Christ, the Universalist, while he has no faith or confidence in the popular theory, devoutly believes the Bible to be the record of the revelation from God to man. And we are very confident, that his views of this subject must be adopted, before Christians will, as far as the atonement is concerned, be able to defend their opinions against the assaults of skeptics and unbelievers. Indeed,

while the latter identify this item of the popular creed, with the doctrines and truths of the Bible, there is every reason to believe that their infidelity will become more and more inveterate and incurable.

If we are correct—and it is believed that enough has been said in the brief view here taken of the subject, to show that we are—then the advocates of the prevailing doctrine of atonement, are to some extent responsible for the infidelity of which they complain. And it is very certain, that a vast majority of modern unbelievers were once, directly or indirectly, connected with the sects which profess that doctrine. This fact, if no other consideration can weigh with those who maintain a vicarious atonement, should induce them to reflect on this further truth—that it is their own creed, and not the arguments of unbelievers, which has led so many into stark infidelity. We have no pleasure in this remark—it were very desirable that all Christians should maintain no doctrines or opinions, but such as are reasonable, scriptural, and consequently defensible.

In the mean time, we think it must be tolerably plain to the unbeliever, that his objections to the truth of the Bible on the score of the common doctrine of atonement, are unfounded. And if so, then it must be equally clear even to him, that one of his arguments against a divine revelation, proves to be no argument at all—and consequently, that

the various inconsistencies, contradictions and abominations with which he is pleased to think the doctrine of atonement overwhelms the Bible, has no relation to that divine book. He may amuse himself with the absurdities of a popular article of certain creeds, but he must recollect that it has nothing to do with the Scriptures of truth. They never required nor authorized the modern system of atonement—nor are they directly or remotely answerable for the mistakes into which Christians may have fallen, respecting that, or any other subject. A duty hence devolves upon the unbeliever—to examine the Bible, as well as the creeds of Christians. And when he is as well informed respecting the doctrines of the Scriptures, as he probably is concerning those of some Christian sects, he will doubtless discover that he was mistaken in his views of the teachings and truth of the Bible.

CHAPTER V.

INNATE DEPRAVITY.

Among the doctrines which have generally prevailed, and which have been long considered of paramount importance in the Christian church, there are several which have no doubt exerted much influence in forcing men into infidelity. Unfortunately, these have been commonly overlooked by their advocates, in the discussion of the great question respecting the truth of divine revelation. And we are satisfied, that until these doctrines are entirely expunged from the symbols of the church, those who advocate them will never be able to maintain, if a successful, an effectual war with infidelity. They will raise up ten unbelievers for every one whom they convert; and thus continue the unwilling instruments of the infidelity which they vainly endeavor to suppress. For that the unbelief of Hume, Gibbon, Volney, Boulanger, Paine and Palmer, and a host of others, has its foundation in the popular dogmas which have been incorporated with the truths of Christianity, is very evident from their points of attack upon its principles and truths.

Much, therefore, as it stands the unbeliever in hand to examine the premises on which he founds

his infidelity, it is no less important that the professor of the popular Christianity, should very carefully review his creed, "lest haply he be found to fight against God." He may be assured, that whatever in his religious opinions, is incompatible with the character of a wise, equitable and benevolent Deity—whatever is inconsistent with the known abilities and moral perceptions of man, so far from exerting a favorable influence upon the truths of Christianity, will most assuredly encourage infidelity. This fact has been long and deeply deplored by Universalists, and they have exerted a respectable influence in staying this moral plague. And they have done this, while their fellow Christians have stigmatized them with every name of reproach—especially with that of being infidels. That denomination has, however, taken its place between the systems of corrupted Christianity, and a cold and deadly skepticism; and has thus far assisted in reclaiming unbelievers, by restoring to the church a more consistent view of the Gospel. This accounts for the course we have adopted in this work—and will also explain why we continue to notice those particular doctrines which appear to constitute a part, at least, of the causes of modern infidelity.

Among the prevailing doctrines maintained by professing Christians, which have probably led men into skepticism or open infidelity, must be

reckoned that of the entire vitiation of man's moral nature. This doctrine is not content with supposing him incompetent to perform any thing good—it considers him "wholly inclined to all that is evil." And thus, the last vestige of the divine likeness, is not only expelled from the moral character and nature of man, but it invests him with dispositions and even habits that are truly diabolical. It is to make man an incarnation of iniquity, fit only "for treasons, stratagems and spoils" while here on earth, and an equally meet associate for infernal spirits in the world to come.

We have had occasion to allude to this terrible view of the human character before, as among the immediate and influential causes of the imperfection of Christian morality. And we yet think that such is its natural and unavoidable tendency. If both parents and teachers agree in calling a child, a fool, no person can doubt that as soon as the child himself believes it, he will act like one. Nor ought we to wonder, that those who are taught from infancy, that they are naturally as wicked as the devils, should, when old enough to believe their teachers, act up to their views of "poor human nature." We would by no means insinuate that those who believe this doctrine are thus wicked—most hearts are too good to be wholly ruined by such a creed; and there is luckily, too much good sense left in the world,

to admit of these views being carried into practice. But these are restraining causes, which by no means destroy the actual influence of those opinions.

Let a man divest himself of the predilections which early and habitual views of this subject inspire—and then let him be told, that it is an important item in the Christian revelation that man is "totally averse to all that is good, and wholly inclined to all that is evil;" and depend upon it, he will not believe the statement. But his astonishment will be unutterable, when he is further told, that all this is not in consequence of any act of his own, but results by imputation from the sin of the first father of his race. He must be a very extraordinary man, who thus situated, would not suppose himself trifled with, or abused. Instead of believing, he would think it quite as absurd as any other conjecture of human weakness, and altogether too inconsistent to be ascribed to divine revelation. And he would argue—that a God of benevolence could not inflict such evils upon the unoffending, nor one of wisdom, reveal a system so utterly at variance with human experience.

But the difficulties of this unfortunate system of natural depravity, instead of diminishing, are continually augmented and accumulated by every new examination. And this, whether regarded in the light of reason, or of revelation. If this is

sustained, we shall cease to wonder that those who rely more upon their powers of discrimination, than upon the exercise of those powers in the actual investigation of truth, should reject both the doctrine of man's entire corruption, and the Scriptures which are supposed to teach that ungracious dogma. To believe that it is true is probably beyond the ability of any one who carefully examines the grounds of his opinions—to believe that it is a part of the great system of divine revelation, is equally impossible when the Bible shall be examined without the stupifying influence of a cherished and popular creed.

Let reason be asked, whether there is any evidence in the moral world, that the sins of one individual constitute any other person either sinful or guilty? There is—and there can be but one answer—that those who have not actually sinned, are neither guilty of crime, nor deserving of punishment. Every person feels this, acts upon it—and all human institutions recognize its propriety. What people, with any pretensions to a regular system of jurisprudence, punishes the child for the sin of the parent? What civil code, that will permit the punishment of the unoffending for the guilty? None—except, perhaps, where the will of some petty tyrant is the law of the land—nor even there, unless in the moment of unguarded and uncontrolled passion, or under some peculiar provocation. The common sense of mankind—

of all who have paid any attention to civil policy and individual right, has long since determined that children are not culpable for the follies and crimes of their parents. The doctrine of original and total moral depravity, consequently stands opposed to the universal practice of mankind—a practice founded upon the dictates of reason and humanity. And he who believes that dogma, is reduced to the necessity of violating the suggestions of reason for the sake of his creed.

And it may surely be asked, how mankind came to make such benevolent arrangements in their social relations, if they were wholly incapable of any thing good—if they could only think and act wrong, and that continually? It surely will not be pretended, that minds purified from this original contamination, have laid the foundation of the civil institutions in every land. So far from this, if their views were acted upon, they would soon erase the marks of benignity impressed upon national policy and laws, and cover the face of the whole earth with the abominations of a system alike foreign to truth, and corrupting to virtue.

If we contemplate man individually, we shall find still clearer evidences of the moral constitution of his race. Admit, if you please, that there is much to deplore, much that is truly and dreadfully evil. But is it now—or has it ever been wholly so? Has there been nothing but crime,

and violence, and blood? The answer is, that great and manifold as have been the evils—there is, and always has been much good; and probably more good than evil in the conduct of man.—The social relations—the domestic charities have been universally cherished; and the holy affections and sympathies which bind heart to heart, and that find their office and employment in the "weal or wo" of kindred nature, have watched at the pillow of distress and wiped away the tear of anguish and sorrow—or given new and inspiring impulses to human comfort and joy. The common bonds of society have been sustained—the rights of property, of liberty and life have been commonly respected, and to some extent enjoyed, and truth, justice and benignity have generally marked the intercourse between man and man. All this is notoriously true, and obvious to every mind—bad as the world really is. And the perception of this, has induced many otherwise candid and well-disposed persons, to reject the doctrine of the native depravity of man—and with it, the Bible, from which they presumed it was legitimately drawn.

Let us then inquire, if the Bible teaches the doctrine of the entire and original corruption of human nature? If it does thus teach, then it is of course a subject of divine revelation—if that book does not teach that doctrine, then the popular views of human depravity are as plainly of

human invention. Take, then, the history of the first recorded sin, and of its punishment, which may fairly be supposed to involve all the consequences which the Deity intended should result to mankind; and it will be found that not a soul of all the unborn race of Adam, is in any respect implicated, or so much as named. Such is the penalty annexed to the offence—"thou shalt surely die," and the punishment inflicted was—"in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Now who could infer from this, that the sin of the first man involved the entire corruption and guilt of all his race? We venture to say, that no one can extract such an inference by any process of torture to which he may subject the passage! And the same is true of every other text, quoted with a view to support the doctrine of inherent and total depravity. While on the contrary, there are passages which assert that "every man shall die for his own sins,—the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."—And again, "death passed upon all men," not because the first man transgressed—but, because "all have sinned."

It is not to be denied, that the actions of parents greatly influence the circumstances of their children—a fact that is recognized by the Bible.

But who ever supposed, because an ignorant or vicious parent might involve his offspring in ignorance, and perhaps even in vice, that therefore the child was criminal by the mere imputation of his father's iniquity? So far from this, they are rather the objects of pity and commiseration on account of their misfortunes, than of blame for vices over which they could have no control. And who of all the multitudes of sufferers from these causes, ever felt the least guilt or compunction of conscience—however much of shame and mortification he may have endured, for the sins of his predecessors? This also explains one important passage of Scripture, in which it is said that God visits "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Here was a fair occasion to have asserted the doctrine of the universal and eternal corruption of the human race by the single act of their primogenitor—had it been true: instead of which, be the consequences less or more, they are limited to some *three or four generations.*

It has now been shown, that the doctrine of the total moral depravity of mankind is neither agreeable with reason and experience, nor taught in the Bible. What great credit is due the unbeliever, for discovering that it is not one of common sense? He has not yet learned that it is not maintained in that book, which all Christians re-

ceive as a record of divine revelation. In this respect, he is truly orthodox—for he believes as firmly as any advocate for the inherent corruption of mankind, that this horrid libel upon moral nature is a part of Scripture instruction. And he believes this, for the very same reason that thousands of Christian professors do—because he has neither the disposition to adopt, nor the patience and industry to pursue, the measures which would insure correct information. Having principally to do with those whose creed compelled them to concede the point—the skeptic turned infidel at once; and took for granted the question at issue which his own candor should induce him to examine with special care. And it is matter of equal astonishment, that one believes this strange and degrading hypothesis, to be a part of divine truth, and the other rejects the Bible because that book is supposed to teach it; and that all this is believed or disbelieved, while no good evidence exists that either has very carefully examined the subject.

The unbeliever should know, that there are many sincere believers in the truth of divine revelation, who have no evidence that the Bible teaches the doctrine of original and total depravity, and who consequently do not believe that doctrine. And if they are correct—and the writer of this verily believes they are—then that doctrine is not the fault of the Bible, but of some of its

interpreters. Hence, the skepticism to which it may have given rise, is not to be charged upon the Bible, but to those who maintain it in opposition to the teachings of that book. That doctrine was unknown to the primitive Christians—it was unknown at the commencement of the Pelagian controversy, near the end of the fourth century, and its rudiments were then first asserted by St. Augustine. That great man, in order to maintain the very different hypothesis, that baptism washed away sins, found himself compelled to *assert*, that even infants had received an original taint from Adam, and needed purification in order to fit them for heaven. From that time to the reformation, the complete dominion of popery fostered the growth of everything monstrous and absurd in the doctrines of the church; and the labors of the reformers, were very naturally directed to the correction of more tangible corruptions. By their means, the Bible was once more restored to the laity, and an examination of its teachings, irrespective of the canons of papacy, has gradually exploded a number of dogmas held sacred by the church, and which it is found that the word of Scripture does not authorize.

Thus falls another pillar in the temple of infidelity. And if it should happen that the Bible should be found to hold no doctrine at which either reason or humanity revolts, we do not see but every unbeliever must become a convert

to its truth, or forever forfeit, even in his own estimation, his claim to the exercise of reason. And we can not but hope, that his "reasoning pride" may in this case, have some influence upon his proverbial obstinacy—and induce him to change his ground, when he can no longer consider himself wise by attempting its defence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATURE OF PUNISHMENT.

Among the immediate causes of infidelity, which have their foundation in certain doctrines held by professing Christians, some are more obvious and influential than others. The reasons of this difference, are sometimes contained in the subjects themselves—some being vastly more important than others, some are more intelligible and tangible, while some obtain a kind of preference and are made to stand out in bold relief, as more worthy of special attention. But notwithstanding this difference, every opinion and sentiment maintained by the Christian, which can not be reconciled with both reason and the Bible, has a pernicious influence. For there will be times and occasions in which these views and doctrines will become the subject of remark—and when the most trifling inconsistency will be made the butt of severe criticism and rude animadversion. It behooves the believing Christian, then, to attend to the correctness, reasonableness and scriptural support of every item of his creed to be "faithful in that which is least," as well as in the great matters of eternal truth.

But the unbeliever should recollect, or learn, that when the more important parts of any system are well sustained, the minutia which might have been overlooked in establishing first principles, may also be settled with equal certainty and in perfect harmony with the general plan. Thus, in the discovery of the laws of gravitation, the fundamental principles which regulate and determine the positions and motions of the planets were fully established. But it remained that the oscillations and apparent anomalies should be satisfactorily explained. This, few doubted could be done—and it was done to the conviction of all. So the unbeliever may rest assured, that though in the discussion and confirmation of the great truth of a divine interposition, some of the minor considerations may not be fully settled, they are yet capable of satisfactory explanation, in perfect accordance with the truth and divine origin of the Bible.

It is not intended therefore to canvass every conceivable aberration from consistency, which the sagacity of unbelievers may discover, or fancy that they discover in the views and sentiments of Christians. If we can prove—and we have great hopes of doing so—that several important doctrines of the Christian church, are not contained in the Bible, and do not therefore furnish any ground of objection to its divine authority and authenticity—and at the same time show that the

doctrines of that book are neither unreasonable nor inconsistent, the principle for which we contend, that it is a revelation from God, will be fully established. The unbeliever may then settle the minor difficulties in his way, at his leisure, and as opportunity permits. But if the principal grounds of objection are removed, he must perceive that all others will fail of course, whenever they are made the subject of due investigation.

The prevailing opinion respecting the *certainty* and the *nature of punishment*, has probably exerted considerable influence in promoting infidelity. According to this system, the transgressor is not certain to receive any punishment—much less an adequate one for his sins; while those who are punished, are considered neither more guilty nor deserving of chastisement, than those whom grace spares. At the same time, it supposes that the infliction of punishment is for no other purpose, than the vindication of the honor of God and the sanctity of the divine law—the satisfaction of offended justice, and the propriety of chastising incorrigible sinners. This system also supposes, that some of the guilty are permitted to escape from wrath, because they *believe* that Christ suffered for them, and in their stead; while others whose crimes are no greater, or their guilt no deeper, are made subjects of misery because they do not, or can not also believe. And, as if to encourage the unprincipled and vicious, and to tantalize

the sober, moral man, it is maintained that the most abandoned in crime are more certain to believe and to be saved in consequence, than the more discreet and upright among mankind. It also supposes that the punishment which is inflicted on the disobedient, comprises no one object in relation to the sufferers themselves—save that of misery—misery, of unimaginable intensity, and exhaustless in its means of aggravation.

All this, many honest men very sincerely and confidently believe; and they as confidently assert and endeavor to maintain, that it is the doctrine of divine revelation. Indeed no pains are spared to convince the world, that this very objectionable hypothesis was actually maintained and taught by our Saviour and the apostles, and recorded in the New Testament for the belief of all future generations. And they seem not to be aware, that it involves in any of its features and bearings, either contradiction to the best exercise of reason, or inconsistency with the Bible—much less do they appear sensible, that it is one of the stepping stones to the very door of infidelity.—That such however is the fact, will probably appear from the following considerations.

1. All the possible influences from the dread of punishment, must depend upon the conviction of its certainty. If, then, it is the object of any system to enforce its requirements by the aid of threatenings, they will cease to operate as induce-

ments to obedience, the moment it is discovered that the penalty denounced is not enforced. Let a parent who threatens to punish his child for disobedience, make the popular theology in relation to this subject, a part of his plan of domestic government, and then if he can, wonder at the insufficiency of his authority. Like the nursery tales, it is soon discovered that they were intended for a purpose, which can no longer be effected than while the deception is believed. The unbeliever will argue precisely in the same way—that the punishment denounced by the Deity against the impenitent, is evidently not feared by the professor who often asserts it, and who is presumed to know whether it is taught in the Bible. And he comes to the conclusion, that if the believer who acknowledges himself a transgressor, can escape —there is no reason why *he* should despair. Thus he satisfies himself, that there is really nothing to fear. And his infidelity is confirmed if not caused, by the influence of this sentiment.

2. Another consideration which evidently has much weight in promoting skepticism and infidelity, is the want of proper discrimination between faith and morality—between the merely moral man and the professor on one hand, and the man of upright integrity, and the open and notorious transgressor on the other. The mass of mankind are at a loss to discover as great a difference between the moralist and the believer, as they can

readily see between the virtuous and vicious man. Unbelievers are therefore, little disposed to credit the Christian, when his creed induces him to rank the good and bad in the same general class, and to denounce them as equally dangerous to society, merely because they do not happen to believe a particular creed. And they can not easily bring themselves to believe that a beneficent Deity has suspended their destiny upon so precarious a foundation, as the belief or disbelief of any one particular, which is not clearly stated and fully explained. Besides, those who have not founded and built their hopes upon a different view of the divine economy, will hence be disposed to reject the Scriptures so long as they are supposed to teach that both good and bad are equally corrupt here, and destined to the same sufferings hereafter.

3. But perhaps the most influential cause of infidelity, contained in this general subject, is the recklessness which it supposes in respect to the consequences of punishment. And it must be confessed, that there are few subjects in the vast range of speculation, more effectually calculated to shock both reason and sympathy, than the total disregard of all useful results in the operations of retributive justice. Neither angels nor men—nor yet the stern administrator of the eternal laws of the moral universe, are supposed to derive any benefit from the miseries produced by the inflic-

tion of even endless pains! It is in vain that we seek for an extenuation of such punishment—in vain that we look to the principles of divine or human justice for its propriety—for its illustration in the practice of mankind, or its support in the testimony of the Scriptures. All nature—all experience—all revelation are silent as the grave respecting a punishment whose exclusive object is misery—whose only end, is the infliction of such terrible vengeance. The unbeliever considers this so foreign to all that his judgment, or his feelings can approve, that he bids a kind of defiance to the consequences, and asserts his contempt and abhorrence of the dogma which maintains them, and of the Bible, in which he imagines they are taught.

Suppose that a parent in correcting his child, were to assert that he did so because his justice required it, and that it was impossible to maintain the honor of his law and the dignity of his government in any other way; but that he was indifferent to any consequences upon the child, to his family, or to society; and cared not whether it drove the victim of his displeasure to despair, or wrought an unavailing repentance—for he had long since determined to disinherit him, and had actually done so, before his punishment commenced. What would the advocate of this procedure on the part of the Deity say, were he to see his favorite theory reduced to practice? Let his own

example answer for him. It is sufficient to say, that he would think of the practice, as he constrains others to do of his theory—that it is neither founded in reason, justice nor philanthropy. And so long as some believe and maintain that it is a part of the plan of revealed truth, those who do not discover a better and more consistent system taught in the Bible, will probably reject both that and the creed together.

But it is matter of congratulation to the friends of consistency and truth, that so far from inculcating any thing like the doctrine under consideration, the Scriptures thoughout, teach in the most unqualified terms, both the certainty of punishment for every offence, and that it is inflicted for the benefit of the individual chastised. To this, infidelity itself, can raise no objection, for it is consistent with justice, reason, humanity and experience. And if this can be made evident, as we think it can—the Christian who maintains a different theory, will find reason to modify his opinions accordingly; and the unbeliever who founds his infidelity on the absurdities of the popular views of punishment, must abandon his position as no longer tenable. And he must also perceive, that as he has one argument less, than on the common hypothesis—so we have of consequence, one argument more for the divine origin of the Bible.

1. Those who are acquainted with the language of the Scriptures, will not doubt that they de-

nounce punishment against all transgressors, in proportion, or, "according to their works." This is often threatened both in the Old and New Testaments, as any one may perceive who will examine the subject. The question which remains to be settled, is, do they also inform us, whether this punishment is inflicted? If they do, we shall find very ample illustrations of that truth—and also find it applied to every transgresser, whether he be considered comparatively righteous or unrighteous. What, then, say the Scriptures?

It was said to Adam—"in the day thou eatest (sinnest) thou shalt surely die." This evidently means a moral death—to die "in trespasses and sins," and is supported by a great number of similar expressions in the Bible. No man can read the account of the first recorded transgression, and the cognizance taken of it by the Deity, and not discover, unless he be blinded by prejudice, that in the guilt, shame and sorrow which immediately followed the sin, the promised punishment was actually inflicted. So again in the case of Cain, though his life was spared, yet for the crime of which he was guilty, his sufferings were so intense that he thought it greater than he could bear. The same is true of the best men, as well as of the worst. Jacob, Moses and David, came in for their full share of punishment for their offences. Nor are the chastisements of the divine hand confined to individuals—nations that sin,

are visited with national retribution. The strongest instance of which is recorded, prophetically, in the New Testament, and which actually fell upon the Jews, their city, their temple, and their institutions.

This mass of evidence, which is familiar to those who read the Bible, should satisfy every Christian professor—while the actual experience of every man, should convince the unbeliever, that no man does wrong with impunity. What degradation and self-reproach—what mental anguish and severe compunction, are felt for disobedience? To these probably no adult person is a stranger—and they should teach every one to regard with more caution and fidelity the admonitions of eternal truth contained in the Bible—"the soul that sinneth shall die." And they should further instruct all offenders, that the day of retribution is near; that the "reward of their hands" comes down with instant and overwhelming power—meets them in the moment of transgression, and holds the soul under condemnation until they "cease to do evil, and learn to do well."

2. But however immediate and tremendous the punishment of the wicked—it is plainly designed for their individual good. It is a sufficient vindication of the honor of God, of his moral government, of his eternal justice, that the penalty for sin is enforced. But the *character* of the Deity,

and the *propriety* of his laws are seen in a far more amiable and interesting light, when it is perceived that every moral pain we bear—every mental suffering we endure for our follies and our crimes, are the medicines to heal the diseases of the soul. They are the safe and finally effectual prescriptions, which "wound but to heal—which kill but to make alive."

We are at no loss to apprehend the reasons why pain is connected with the application of fire to the flesh, the luxation of a joint, or the fracture of a bone. All this is plainly for the benevolent purpose of rendering us more circumspect and cautious—it is to guard us against the thousand "ills that flesh is heir to," by the dread of consequences. And notwithstanding the inconvenience and anguish to which it occasionally subjects us, we are no doubt, benefited on the whole, by this arrangement of our physical constitution. It exhibits both design and benevolence—the object being our preservation from the identical evils and sufferings which we are sometimes permitted to experience. Thus it evidently is in the moral constitution of man. He is endowed with a conscience, which when enlightened by the humanizing and purifying genius of the Gospel, is as sensitive to the contaminations of sin, as the nerves to the influence of frost, fire, or laceration. And it is not uncommon to see persons so afflicted by the recollection of some vice, as to form and

keep the resolution, never to allow themselves in its repetition. A single indulgence is sometimes sufficient to awaken and fix the determination, to do what is believed to be right in all future time.

On this principle, it will be perceived that independent of any external consideration, public opinion, or personal interest, we have in the very frame and fashion of our moral and intellectual constitution, two very strong motives to the practice of virtue—the fear of punishment, and the hope of happiness. For while every man must admit that the recollection of sin never gives him satisfaction, by recurring to his feelings in the consciousness of having performed a good action, he will dwell with peculiar delight on the ineffable peace which he experienced. That mental anguish which sin inspires, is punishment, and its victim is suffering the condemnation which he fears. That peace of soul which accompanies well-doing, is happiness; and imparts the bliss of heaven here below. To punish and to reward, have the same common end in view—to induce the wicked to become good, and to confirm the good in the way of duty, honor, peace.

And this is the doctrine of the Bible—"I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Again—"whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every

son whom he receiveth." And again—"the Lord will not cast off forever; but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." The number of Scripture proofs that the object of punishment is paternal, is abundant. We here add but one more in support of our position, as further reference will be made to it in a subsequent number. "For they (our earthly fathers), verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he (that is, God), for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

It is believed that the view here taken of the certainty and emendatory objects of punishment, legitimately authorize the following conclusions—viz. that the doctrine which generally prevails in the Christian church respecting that subject, is not authorized by the Bible. That it gives no countenance to the opinion that some of the wicked will escape—or that the moral man is no better than the vicious—or that punishment is inflicted for no other purpose than that of enhancing and magnifying the glory of God in the misery of man. And consequently, that neither of these, can furnish any ground of objection to the Scriptures, or justify any form of infidelity.—Hence too, unbelievers must perceive, that all the arguments and objections which they may bring against the common opinion, respecting the nature

and end of punishment, have no relation to the truth and authority of the Bible. To reject that book, because some men hold sentiments which it does not authorize nor contain, is to reject all truth, because we sometimes hear falsehoods. It has been shown, that the Scripture doctrine of the nature and certainty of punishment, is both reasonable and in accordance with universal experience,—and as reasonable men, how can unbelievers object to its truth and propriety? They can not—and when they have duly examined the subject, they will not; but will believe, obey, and rejoice in the truth of divine revelation.

CHAPTER VII.

ENDLESS MISERY.

It is hoped that the believers of certain doctrines, will not take it amiss, that some of the most common and obvious causes of infidelity, and which are found in those doctrines themselves, are briefly stated and examined. It may be of service to them. For the Christian can lose nothing except a few cumbersome and unintelligible dogmas—which Heaven could not reveal, either because what can not be understood is no revelation, or because it is derogatory to the character and perfections of the Deity, the entire removal of such parts of his creed, would be to his mind and moral feelings, what the clearing away of fog and clouds is to his sight and perceptions. On the other hand—if the infidel could be shown that several doctrines against which his indignation has been excited, and which have been the moving causes of his unbelief, are really no part of the teachings of the Bible, but that they are the antiquated remnants of a vain philosophy, fostered by ages of extreme darkness, he will probably find new and higher reasons to respect both Christianity and its friends.

These, then, are the very things which are here intended; and it is believed with some confidence, that if the patience of the parties will hold out with our labors, the result may be useful. It is, however, a thankless task to endeavor to give information to those who are not aware that they need any—more especially so, when it is offered to those who have long been in the habit of giving, rather than of receiving instruction. From those professors whose opinions will be made the subject of remark, little gratitude or even complacency is expected; and from unbelievers, whom we would lead up from their troubled waters, to the ever-flowing fountain of Christian truth, experience has taught us to anticipate a most fatal apathy. The former are too dogmatical to be taught—the latter too indifferent to desire or seek further information.

We shall, however, cast our "bread upon the waters," believing that there are, and will be some, to whom it may prove the bread of life—the healthful food of the soul. The great difficulty with many very honest Christians, in relation to their opinions, is, their sincere conviction that religion, the Christian religion must be contrary to nature. That its principles and requirements are opposed to the dictates of reason, to the better feelings of the heart, and to the enjoyment of social comfort. Any one thing in which they find themselves comfortable and happy, is viewed with suspicion, as

emanating from some evil source. Hence they feel a kind of necessity to believe the most revolting dogmas, and to perform a number of supposed duties at much self-sacrifice and mortification. Some of these we have already noticed, and others require particular consideration—among which may be reckoned, *the doctrine of endless misery*.

There can be no proof more conclusive, than that furnished by many of the most distinguished unbelievers—that they were first led to doubt the truth and genuineness of Christianity, by contemplating the horrors of the doctrine of endless punishment. How wide this influence may have spread, is beyond our means of determining. That it is very extensive, is unquestionable, as this very doctrine is daily urged as one of the principal grounds of objection to the truth of Christianity. And even where these objections could not be made with safety, it is morally certain that the human mind takes the same direction—and a silent but fatal infidelity is generated and maintained. The history of the French Revolution, is a history of the success of the combined efforts of a band of skilful and reckless unbelievers, who covertly plotted and finally overturned the social, civil, and religious institutions of the state.

The aspect of the doctrine of endless punishment, is so dreadful, as not only to drive some into infidelity, but it has destroyed the *happiness* and

the *reason* of thousands of its professors. It has been fruitful in despair, derangement, and suicide. Some of its most learned and devoted advocates have been constrained to acknowledge, that its contemplation rendered every enjoyment insipid, and life itself a "cruel bitter." Others have admitted that its direct assertion was attended with great danger, as few could bear the thought of its mere possibility without becoming insane. And under this impression, they satisfy themselves that it should not be made the subject of frequent discussion, especially in times of general religious excitement. To this there are many modern exceptions; and the distressing consequences have been, a great increase of religious mania, and a proportionate number of suicides.

Such are the concessions made to this terrible doctrine, by some of its most talented and devoted friends. And it should satisfy them, as it does many others who have never doubted the truth of the Christian system, that the doctrine of endless misery *can not be true*. When they witness the multiplied cases of infidelity to which it gives rise—the havoc which it makes with many noble minds—the utter despair with which it overwhelms so many hearts, and the shocking deaths of which it is the undeniable cause, they should stop and ask themselves—whether it be possible for such a system to be a revelation from Heaven? They should earnestly, repeatedly, and solemnly inter-

rogate their own hearts—if such consequences can be supposed to follow any truth which is of undoubted divine authority? Whether the Deity could permit the existence of misery so intense and so horrid, if he be the good and gracious Being every where evinced in all the works of nature, and uniformly asserted in the Scriptures? Is it—can it be consistent with his acknowledged attributes, to suffer such intolerable miseries to constitute any part of the plan of his moral government? Or, is it possible that any being—much less a good one—should reveal a system which, if true, must forever degrade him in the eyes of all intelligences—the influence of which always has been, and always must be, detrimental to human happiness? Surely the world was already wretched enough without the apprehension of endless torments; and that must be a most singular benevolence, which would interfere with the condition of man only to augment his wo! And above all, could a God of infinite wisdom reveal to mankind for their adoption, a system so odious, that he must have foreseen its rejection—and instead of rendering the world more devout and religious, to fill it with skepticism and despair?

And who can marvel that a system which comprises so many serious and alarming difficulties and incongruities, should be rejected as an instrument of oppression in the hand of tyranny, and alike unworthy of the mind of God or man? Who

can be surprised, that many who can not, or will not perform the labor of examination, should take for granted that it is a doctrine of the Bible, and consequently reject both together? And there is great liability of confounding the doctrine in question with the truth of the Bible, from the unwearied pains which have been taken for some time past, to fasten it upon the Scriptures. All the means at the disposal of several whole communities of Christians, have been put in requisition—every passage of Scripture having the most remote allusion to the punishment of the wicked, has been tasked to the utmost in order to sustain this miserable dogma. It has become the theme of daily gossip—the subject of pulpit labor—the burden of the press, and the bone of public controversy. Hence the public mind has been specially called to its contemplation; and no man can wonder that among the palpable consequences may be found an increase of infidelity. For while there are those with whom absurdities pass for mysteries, and who seem to relish with ferocious pleasure, the picture of anguish which a morose and gloomy system presents to their imagination; there are others, who are too impatient of an unreasonable and cruel doctrine, ever to think of inquiring whether it was fabricated by the church, or derived from revelation.

But the unbeliever is assured, that there are many good and substantial reasons for believing

that the doctrine of the endless punishment of any part of the human race, is not contained in the Bible. And if it should be fairly shown that it neither is, nor can be found in that book, it may be presumed that, as a reasonable and candid man, he will admit, for once, at least, that he has charged upon Christianity a doctrine for which it is not responsible. And this should also admonish him to be more vigilant in future, and not decide on the truth of an immensely important subject, from some particular appendage which vice or folly may have added, and which superstition or terror may have perpetuated. It is believed that he will be the more disposed to do this, if it should be successfully shown that, while reason inculcates a more benevolent view of the destiny of man—that view is sustained by the strongest expressions of truth recorded in the Bible.

1. The doctrine of the positive eternity of misery as the punishment of human offences, is inconsistent with the acknowledged attributes of the Deity. There is not, and there probably never was a believer in the doctrine in question, who does not admit the existence of perfections in the Deity, which can never be reconciled with the idea of endless suffering. To go no further: he believes and acknowledges that God is infinitely, uniformly and universally good; and that he is, consequently, unchangeably good to all men in general, and to every man in particular. Now, by what possi-

ble deduction of reason, consistent with that goodness, can it be inferred that any one member of the human family can be made miserable through a proper eternity? None can pretend that such sufferings are in themselves good—they are universally supposed to constitute the greatest possible evil. No man will or can say that they are productive of good to the sufferer—or that they are the evidence of goodness, much less of infinite goodness, in the Being by whom they are inflicted. They are, therefore, inconsistent with that goodness in God, which is plead for and maintained by the advocates of endless punishment. Nay, more—this doctrine is not merely inconsistent with, but is directly contrary to the divine character. For were he infinitely malignant instead of benevolent, and had he tasked the resources of his infinite mind to produce an infinite evil, what worse could he have done than to inflict endless tortures upon his sentient creation? Let the advocates of this dreadful system beware then, lest they so far forget what infinite, universal, and unchangeable goodness is, as to impute to it the office of infinite malevolence!

2. The doctrine of endless punishment, is inconsistent with reason. No doubt is entertained of the right to punish for offences, nor of the propriety of punishing so long as it is productive of any good. But it by no means follows, that it is either right or proper for any being to inflict pun-

ishment so long as it possesses the means—especially when such punishment can do no good. And as endless punishment can do no good, reason can never acquiesce in its infliction. Again—man is a being possessed only of finite powers and capacities—his actions and their consequences are therefore limited. Hence reason infers, that he can neither deserve, nor properly and justly receive endless punishment. The pretence that justice requires the endless misery of the wicked, is assuming what never has been, and never can be proved—for it is to maintain that eternal justice demands what is unreasonable. Besides, it becomes us to distinguish between justice and cruelty, but the very idea of such misery, is to confound all such distinctions, and amalgamate all perception in one concentration of unutterable wo. Strict and impartial justice must have an ulterior object in all its inflictions; and the existence of such an object, implies that those inflictions must have an end.

3. The doctrine of endless punishment, is inconsistent with the truths of the Bible. However long or severe punishment may be, it is not once said in the Bible to be without end. So far from this, the strongest expressions indicative of perpetuity, are never once applied to sin, punishment, or misery. Thus *aphtharsia*, signifying incorruptibility, immortality, and its adjective *aphtharlos*, meaning immortal, incorruptible—*athanasia*,

immortality, deathless, and *athanatos*, immortal, perpetual—*akatalutos*, indissoluble, or endless—and *aperantos*, infinite, boundless, are all used in the New Testament, but are never found in connexion with either sin or misery. Besides these, there are several others, as *aidios*, perpetual—*akeratos*, pure, uncorrupt, immortal—and *apeiros*, unlimited, indefinite, which might have been used to convey a much stronger idea of duration than *any word* that *is* applied to punishment. But neither of these is so used—a fact not easily accounted for, if it was the intention of the sacred penmen to convey the idea of a strict eternity of punishment for the wicked. That they were well aware of the meaning of these terms, there can be no doubt, as they used the first class above enumerated, to convey the idea of life and blessedness. And in particular, these are the words which they employ as descriptive of the state, condition, and duration of the human spirit after the resurrection. On the contrary, every word applied to the sufferings of the wicked, is, by common usage, of limited signification. None are employed to express the duration of sin and misery but *aei*, *aion*, and *aionios*, which are commonly rendered always, forever, everlasting, eternal, world, and age. Some of these are used in the plural, which sufficiently implies their limitation, and all of them more or less frequently, in such connexions as to show that they *can not* mean

endless duration. And as it is plain that the writers of the New Testament were under no necessity to use the words which they did, to express the duration of misery, it is evident that they chose such as were of limited import. To these facts there are no exceptions, nor can the utmost ingenuity of man ever find one.

But we are not left to rely upon negations, in this important subject. The Scriptures do unequivocally declare, that a period shall come when there shall be no more pain, nor sorrow, nor death—when Christ shall draw all men to himself, put all things, including all enemies, under his feet, and having subdued all things, God shall become all in all. And finally, even punishment is represented in the Bible as one of the means of bringing about that holiness which is necessary to perfect and endless happiness. It is said that God chastens us for our profit, "that we should be partakers of his holiness," and also, that "afterwards"—that is, *after punishment*—"it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness" to those who are punished. But if the punishment of sin is endless, when is this *afterwards* to come? and why punish men when they have become partakers of the holiness of God? But enough of these queries. It has now been shown that endless punishment is inconsistent with the character and perfections of God—that it is contrary to reason, and unsupported by the Bible. It is not, there-

fore, a doctrine of Christianity, and in rejecting it, no man should suppose that he rejects the Bible or the truths of the Gospel.

In view of these facts, the unbeliever is asked, if there is any good reason for rejecting the Bible because some Christians believe and maintain the doctrine of endless punishment? Christianity and the Bible are no more responsible for this doctrine, than they are for a thousand other foolish and absurd things which daily occur among men, and which are known to originate in other causes. Nor are they responsible for the moral apathy which prevents unbelievers from properly investigating the subject, and ascertaining where the doctrine properly belongs. Unfortunately it would seem that the gloomy and misanthropic temperament of some early Christians, originated the doctrine in question; and more or less of modern infidelity, is fairly chargeable to the tenacity with which it is at present maintained. It is very certain, that the doctrine of endless punishment was scarcely known in the Christian church during the first two centuries. For the first person who is known to have asserted the equal duration of the misery of the wicked and happiness of the righteous, is Tertullian, who flourished about A. D. 200, and as no one maintained the positive eternity of punishment before that time, there is much reason to conclude that it was not believed. This is rendered still more probable, not to say

certain, by the very important fact, that many of the most distinguished Christian fathers of that period, maintained, in the most unqualified manner, the doctrine of universal salvation. Of these the most eminent was Clemens, of Alexandria. Since, then, it can not be denied that universal salvation was the belief of many, and those of the first distinction, while only one can be found who maintained the doctrine of endless punishment, it is very full proof that this latter hypothesis is a corruption of Christian truth. But the doctrine of endless punishment once broached, found advocates, and eventually became the standard of orthodoxy in the church. This honor was however delayed for several centuries. And it was not until the year 394 of the Christian era, almost two hundred years after it was first avowed, that it had gained numbers sufficient to authorize a public censure of the doctrine of the restitution. Nor was it fully established, and Universalism suppressed under the name of Origenism, until A. D. 553, nearly four hundred years after its introduction into the church by Tertullian. So that the doctrine of endless misery has not been the prevailing sentiment of the church more than about thirteen hundred years. How preposterous then, its claim to be the doctrine of Jesus and his disciples!

Let the infidel look to these things, if he wishes to be thought candid, or if he seriously

has any desire of discovering and embracing the truth. And let those who would palm this doctrine upon the world as the truth of Heaven, look to the consequences. Existing facts go far, very far, to prove that infidelity will never be expelled from some minds, while endless misery makes a prominent part of any Christian creed. For however he may triumph over the unbeliever in a general argument, this terrible doctrine will perpetually haunt his imagination, and will finally expel every favorable impression. For depend on this, that however he may feel vanquished on other points, he will regard this as a position from which he has not been driven; and he will not consent to the truth of a doctrine which destroys the harmony of the Divine attributes, and sets the deductions of reason at defiance. He will say, if such be the doctrine of the Bible, it must be the work of designing men; and if his infidelity has not become the madness of atheism, he will add—leave the character of the Deity unpolluted by the imputation of a system so offensive to its purity. But when he learns that this doctrine is neither a part of Christianity, nor taught in the Bible, if he is constituted like other men, and the religious feelings ever touch and warm his heart, he will feel new and grateful emotions as he imbibes the great and redeeming truths, that a God of goodness could not devise—a God of truth could not reveal, and a God of mercy can never

inflict endless miseries upon mankind. But that the Bible teaches, that Christianity secures to the believer the hope of future universal glory and blessedness.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLENARY INSPIRATION.

Several causes of infidelity have been already found in some of the existing doctrines of the Christian church—doctrines which neither have, nor can have, any bearing upon the truth of the Gospel, unless they can be shown to be a part of the plan of divine revelation. This, if we are not greatly mistaken, can never be successfully done, nor is it conceived to be possible to set aside the evidence which has been furnished, that the particular doctrines to which we have referred, were not originally comprised in the articles of Christian faith. And there is good reason to believe, that all other ostensible causes of infidelity, respecting the being and perfections of God—his general providence, and the revelation of his will, as recorded in the Bible—are equally unfounded in truth.

Hitherto we have seen the infidel combatting facts, which though actual and palpable, have no relation to his subject. They are the mere accidents of the Christian profession, but formed no share of the original system of revealed truth.

And he might as well object that there is no such thing as a sun in the universe, because it sometimes happens to be night, or occasionally a cloudy day. He has not failed to inform himself correctly respecting the latter, and should by all means use the proper means to obtain certain information with regard to the former. For can the unbeliever think—can any man seriously think that he has no greater interest in the question, whether man has a Creator to whom he is bound by ties that death itself can not sever, than in one of mere science? Has he—can he have so deep an interest in any other subject, as in that which assures him that he is under the constant care and guidance of a benevolent Deity, who will support him through the trials of the present life, and after death, crown him with immortality and blessedness? We know not the amount of indifference which men may feel on this subject—but it really appears impossible to doubt what answer every man would give to these questions.

Every one of the subjects connected with the profession of Christianity, and which has had any influence in furnishing the materials of infidelity, is an accumulation made in the progress of the Gospel through the dark ages. They are as useless to the Christian, as would be the ancient baronial castles for defence in modern times. Both may be precious in the eyes of their respective owners, but no man ought to trust his body to the

safety of one, or the keeping of his soul to the other—both are falling under the weight of years.

There are certain opinions prevailing among many Christians, which have had their full share of influence, in the production of skepticism or infidelity. Among these, the belief of the actual inspiration of every word of the Bible, holds the first rank. And though far less pernicious in its moral and relative influences, than some of the doctrines which have been noticed, it is perhaps as fruitful as any one of them in unbelief. The opinion that every part and particular of the Bible was written by the inspiration of God, was probably never known to produce despair, insanity, or suicide, whatever task it may have laid upon human credulity. Nor is there any evidence that its belief ever made any man better, or that its disbelief is productive of immorality. And as to any obligation on the part of the Christian, to maintain and defend the inspiration of every part of the Old and New Testaments, none exists. The Bible itself, makes no such demand upon the credulity of any man. And it contains no evidence whatever, that any of the writers of that book—whether priest or prophet, patriarch or apostle, lawgiver or evangelist—ever required such an exertion of faith. All that is asked, is, that mankind should believe that their statements are true. But it requires no special discernment to perceive that inspiration can not be necessary to enable

candid and honest men to tell the truth. And it is supposing the Deity officiously performing a work of entire supererogation, to maintain that he inspired men to do what could be done equally well without such aid. The idea that God especially aided with his spirit, in the performance of what any man of common honesty might and would do, in the circumstances described, is to the last degree preposterous.

But lest this should be doubted, let a few examples be taken from both the Old and New Testaments, and it is believed that full satisfaction may be gained in relation to the subject. What inspiration could be requisite to enable the historian to give a circumstantial account of the personal combat between David and Goliath, and of the subsequent battle between the hostile armies of Philistia and Israel? It plainly required no such aid to give the narration, any more than it was necessary to record the encounter between the *Horatii* and *Curatii*, or to give a detailed account of the battle of Waterloo. There was nothing supernatural in the case—and even if there had been, it would not require such aid to enable candid and honest men to relate what they saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears.

Take another instance, from the account given in the New Testament, of the apprehension, trial, and crucifixion—and even the resurrection of Christ—and then endeavor to ascertain why the

special inspiration of the evangelists was necessary to enable them to relate the facts there recorded. Some of them were eye-witnesses of nearly all the transactions. It surely could not be necessary to those who were present—nor could it be to those who were not eye-witnesses, so long as they had access to all the means of information on the subject. St. Luke was one of the latter, and he expressly tells us, that he derived his knowledge of the facts from the ordinary means—the information of eye-witnesses, instead of deriving it from inspiration. And we would respectfully ask our brethren who are so tenacious of the plenary inspiration of the evangelists, whether we should believe Luke, or themselves?

The history of the accession and reign of the respective kings of Judah and Israel, contained in the Old Testament, and which is continued through a succession of ages, could not require, and evidently did not receive, the aids of inspiration. For, with the exception of the occasional incidents which attest some extraordinary interposition, and making allowance for national peculiarities, the record is in all respects, such as must appertain to every people having a regular government. And we see no reason why every part of the extended history here alluded to, might not be written without the aid of special inspiration. It is not pretended by any one of the writers, that such help was received—and why any one should

now find it necessary to honor them with a distinction which they never claimed, is not understood.

There are also in the New Testament, certain passages and disavowals which plainly forbid the ascription of the agency of the divine spirit in all that is there recorded. Such is the request made by Paul, that a young fellow-laborer should bring from a certain place, some books, parchments, and a cloak which that apostle had left behind. Nothing could be more common and natural, than this request. It is one of familiar occurrence in all communities; and it is extremely difficult to imagine either the propriety or necessity of any superhuman aid in its expression. And we are confident that setting up a claim to such aid, for such occasions, instead of doing honor to the divine spirit, and inducing respect for the claims of the Bible, is the very way of all others to produce a very different result. As it has been more than once already remarked, so it may be again—it is one of the ways by which Christians very certainly promote infidelity. For no man, not predisposed by the principles of a favorite hypothesis, can for a moment believe, that the holy spirit moved the apostle to request a friend to bring him his cloak! And the consequence will be, what it too frequently is, that too many become skeptical respecting the whole Bible. It is surely enough that inspiration should be given, and there is evi-

dence that it was given, *when necessary*; but to insist that it is universally applied to the most trifling and unimportant expression, as well as to the great purposes of prophecy, is to defeat the ends for which it is maintained. And the time will come, when the advocates for the actual inspiration of every word of the Bible, will feel grateful that there are Christians who could find and show other and more substantial reasons for the credibility of the Scriptures.

The catalogue of examples might be increased to any extent; but from those given, it will not be doubted that a vast many others might be furnished. But as every one can perform this work for himself, their introduction will be dispensed with in this place. It will be sufficient to say, that all the general history of the Hebrews as a nation—the books called Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, in the Old Testament—and all the historic parts and epistles of the New—could no more require the special interposition of the holy spirit to enable their respective authors to write them, than such assistance was requisite to the writing of the history of Rome, the American State papers, or the letters of Washington. And it is matter of peculiar satisfaction, to feel assured that this statement, so far from favoring the cause of unbelief, is directly calculated to remove one of the reasons of its existence. And since the inspiration of every part of the Bible is no where,

in that book, made the subject of faith, the Christian should be careful so to regulate his creed, as not to incur the imputation of being wise above what is written.

It will probably be asked—and the question should be distinctly answered—if direct inspiration was not required in order to the confirmation of the particular writings named, in what part or particular was it necessary? The inspiration that appertains to the Bible, relates to the *subject matter*, instead of the style or manner of expression. This is obvious, from a comparison of the general style of composition employed by different prophets. That of the Psalms and of Isaiah, is immensely more lofty and engaging, than most of the others. Yet in all, there are particular parts in which the composition accords with the sublimity of the subject. It was then, *the truth recorded* which required the inspiration of God, and *not the language* in which the record was made. The language was one in common use, and each inspired writer was left to use it in his own peculiar way. And in its proper place we shall discover that this was by far the most suitable, both for those to whom the revelation was immediately sent, and for all after generations.

The special mission of Moses, for effecting the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, presents an undoubted instance of a divine interposition. He was expressly inspired for that particular pur-

pose, and in some instances, was instructed what words he should employ, as well as what miracles he should perform. But even here, with the exceptions named, he was left to use such language and forms of speech, as the occasion suggested. And the same remark applies, generally, to the whole of that extraordinary trust reposed in him, for bringing the Hebrews to the land of promise, and for giving them those remarkable institutions by which they were distinguished from all other nations. As a lawgiver, announcing the divine will, he adheres with punctilious exactness to the letter of his instructions. But as a man, he receives the advice of his friends, and speaks and acts as other men may be supposed to do under similar circumstances. And that he does so, is one very important evidence, that when he gave a system of moral rules for the benefit of his nation, they were, what they profess to be, given by inspiration of God.

The messages of the respective prophets, were also by divine inspiration. And the fact that they were actual prophecies of events, which for many successive ages have been gradually developing, is of itself evidence that they were dictated by the energy of the Deity. Man, by the mere unassisted powers of his own mind, is wholly incompetent to the task, which was certainly performed by the Jewish prophets—that of foretelling events with accuracy and certainty. The ample percep-

tion of a mind, which grasped a long and an immense concatenation of causes and consequences, is alone equal to such a work. And when we see it performed, we are constrained to believe that the influences of such a mind were felt by the men who looked through the involutions of human affairs, with the precision with which an astronomer, by the help of a telescope, penetrates the regions of space. But this did not affect the terms in which they communicated their predictions to mankind. They still used, and must necessarily use, the common language of their country, in making themselves intelligible to the great mass of the people; and in some instances, they employed others to write down the message which they delivered orally. The prophets were not always under the influence of prophecy—they lived and acted among men, and bore the character and sustained the relations common to other men. And in that character they neither needed nor ordinarily used the inspiration of which, at times, they were the distinguished recipients.

The whole life of Jesus, was one of continued and illustrious mental and moral illumination. From the moment of his public manifestation as a messenger from God, his conversation, his teachings, and his whole conduct, were of a character suited to the great objects of his mission. Every thing in relation to him, is fraught with the most striking and impressive tokens of the accom-

panying spirit and power of the divine presence. And there are the same evidences of the inspiration of God, in his words and in his works—in his life and in his death. In the apostles, the same general purposes were to be answered, and the work was to be carried on, as by their Master. And it was consequently necessary that they should receive the same divine aid. The gifts of the holy spirit of truth and power, were consequently imparted to them; and they exhibited its influence in the devoted zeal, the moral purity, the unbounded charity, the uncompromising fidelity, and the untiring labors of their lives. And yet, there are indications of something more human in their characters, than ever appears in the character of Christ; and there are times when they are plainly left to the dictates of common sense and common discretion, in the regulation of their conduct.

From these facts, it appears that it is sufficient for all the objects and requirements of Christian faith, to believe that the great principles and doctrines of truth contained in the Bible, were given by the inspiration of God; and that those persons who were made the instruments of their revelation to mankind, were also inspired for that purpose. But the Christian need not maintain the inspiration of every part—every word of the Bible. Because in some cases, it could not be necessary—in others it could not be credited if asserted—in

some it is expressly disavowed—and it is in no instance required. And however painful it may be for some professors of the Christian faith, to yield up their belief in the universal inspiration of the Scriptures, they must do so for the sake of consistency. And when they have performed this duty, they will be able to defend, not only a revelation in general, but every part of the Bible, from the assaults of opposers.

In the meantime, unbelievers will discover that the ground of controversy is changed in relation to this subject. And they can neither sneer nor frown upon the Bible, when thus presented to their acceptance, nor successfully controvert the arguments for the inspiration of those truths, which human reason could not and did not discover, and which have greatly improved both the moral and social condition of man, in defiance of the corruptions which have been incorporated with their original principles.

CHAPTER IX.

NATURE OF INSPIRATION.

The reader probably feels desirous, by this time, to know how many *causes of unbelief* he may yet have to wade through, before he arrives at the subject proposed—the internal evidences of Christianity. And as it is reasonable that he should receive an answer, he is assured, that when the utter fallacy of all the causes of infidelity which originate not in the doctrines of Christianity, but in its corruptions, has been shewn, the subject shall receive due attention. We would see the ground cleared of the rubbish, which has been accumulated by negligence or folly, so that however small or incomplete our humble edifice may be, it shall have a foundation which we think secure. Every *error* that can be removed from the Christian's creed, annihilates one cause of skepticism or infidelity. And hence this examination will be continued somewhat further, because we are satisfied that it may be beneficial to two classes of persons—whose opinions, feelings, and prejudices are the most opposite imaginable—the one, a Christian who believes too much, because

more than the Scriptures require of him; and the other, a skeptic who doubts every thing, or an infidel who believes nothing. Neither of these, probably, will approve of this interference with their favorite theories; but still, if the errors of the one produce, as is believed, those of the other, neither ought to complain of an attempt to set both in the right. What has been said thus far, was with that express view—and the same course will be persisted in, so long as there is found a remaining item of any consequence, which constitutes a "loop to hang a doubt on."

One important consequence of maintaining that every word of the Bible was dictated and written by the positive inspiration of God, is—that it involves an objection to the credibility of the Scriptures, in the question, why did not the evangelists record the same facts, and in precisely the same language? It is well known, that unbelievers avail themselves of this, with much apparent satisfaction. Nor is it by any means easy to perceive why, if the divine spirit dictated both the matter and the manner in which it should be communicated, the facts should not be related in all respects alike. But that the several evangelists have not recorded the same facts in all instances, nor, in every case, used the same language, is undeniable. Nor have we ever seen a satisfactory reason for this circumstance, on the supposition that they wrote by immediate inspiration. Parallels

drawn from profane history, do not reach the case; they may perfectly illustrate every thing concerning it, except what relates to the agency or energy by which the writers were influenced. The attention of different individuals as men, might be directed to different objects, and of course partial differences might occur in their statements respecting any general truth; but this is no criterion by which the same men must act, when expressly inspired to record a train of given events. It seems most natural to suppose, that they would make the relation with minute uniformity in every particular.

Hence it appears, that if the Christian maintains the positive inspiration of every part of the Bible, the discrepancies in the evangelical history, may be urged as incompatible with such influences. If, on the other hand, he attempts to vindicate these by parallels drawn from secular writings, it may be objected that the cases do not admit of the comparison. Thus, which ever way the advocate of the entire inspiration of the Scriptures turns, he seems destined to take a position calculated to induce the skeptic to reject both the Bible and the creed together.

Under these considerations, we may be allowed to ask—would it not be a favor alike beneficial to the believer so situated, and to the unbeliever, that a system of divine truth, based upon the plainest maxims of common sense, and supported

by the testimony of revelation, should be presented—one which neither involves the difficulties above noticed, nor can encourage, even remotely, the objections of the skeptic? Such a system was presented in the last preceding article of this series—in which it was shown that many parts of the sacred writings required no inspiration, and made no pretensions to any; and that where inspiration was obviously given, it related to the *matter*, or general truth, and not to the *manner* in which it was communicated. It is believed that this is the true state of the subject, and that it places the Scriptures on their native ground of fitness and consistency, and at the same time beyond the reach of any well-founded objection to the inspiration of their fundamental doctrines. For it leaves every writer of the Bible, at perfect liberty to relate the truths committed to him, in his own peculiar way, and to use such forms of expression as were congenial with his habits of life, or the state of his education.

From these causes, some are more particular than others, even in their account of the same transactions. Some wrote in lofty, some in chaste, and all in the earnest, simple, and unaffected style of honest men, whose chief concern was to state the truth. They never appear solicitous about the result of their statements, and never, in any instance, court the belief of a single fellow-being. The evangelists, especially, relate

in simple and unostentatious terms, facts to which they were eye and ear witnesses, or of which they had "perfect knowledge from the beginning." This is the grand reason of all the discrepancies of which we hear so much, and concerning which, those who object to them generally know so very little. And yet, we venture to say that were it not for those very decrepancies, we should hear a much more confident voice of objection against the New Testament, than infidelity has yet dared to raise.

Let it be supposed that the four evangelists are witnesses on the stand, in one of our high courts of judicature. And let it be further supposed, that the presiding judge is one of those who object to the Gospel history, because there is not a circumstantial and verbal agreement in the statement of all the writers. Now let it be also supposed that these four persons bear witness in a given case, as they have done in the New Testament—each one relating in his own peculiar manner, the facts which came under his own observation, or of which he had acquired a full knowledge from unquestionable sources. Would not that judge think better of such testimony, and would he not so inform the jury, than if it had been in all respects precisely the same? No man can doubt this; and it is believed that none will venture to deny, that this is the true course of procedure, as well as the most consistent. And such

is the actual and daily course, in which even infidels as well as all other men proceed, in all the transactions of common life. They are constantly doing this, without once finding fault, or so much as suspecting that there is any occasion of complaint. Nay, more—they would resent as readily, and with as much warmth, any attempt at impeachment of the purity of their motives or veracity, under these very circumstances, as any other class of men in the universe.

For shame, then—what is all this noise about some trifling discrepancies in the Gospel history—these pertinacious endeavors to invalidate the testimony of the evangelists! The great and only important subjects which they have recorded, afford no instance of disagreement; nor any pretext on which to suspend a doubt, either of their own integrity, or the truth of their statements. No doubt some unbelievers would be pleased to have had the same account *verbatim*, from each of the evangelists—they would then have had something to countenance their cavils. But as it is, they must make the best of it, and so keep up their complaints, because, forsooth, it is not more to their liking. We have heard of a petulent husband, who determined to quarrel with his better half, whether she did right or wrong. True, he preferred to have her do wrong, because it kept him in countenance; but still, he could and would find fault, even when she did right, because

such was his fixed determination. Such seems to be the disposition of some unbelievers—they have unfortunately acquired the habit of fault-finding with the Bible, and with those who believe in its truth; and they have become too testy and precipitate to ascertain with much care, whether their objections are well or ill-founded.

From the considerations here offered, it seems difficult to imagine any ground of serious objection to the truth of the Gospel history; since uniformity in every particular, is not to be expected where a number of men relate, independently of each other, the important facts of any given train of events. For it is too well known to require proof, that different minds are variously constituted, and that they are, in consequence, differently influenced by the same facts, and same general circumstances. And so great is this difference in mental constitution, that there are innumerable examples in which men draw very dissimilar or even opposite conclusions from the same general premises. The religious opinions of mankind, who appeal to the same records in vindication and support of their respective theories, may be taken as a prominent illustration of this general truth. It is not singular or extraordinary, then, that the various incidents which occurred during the ministry of Jesus, should affect the minds and feelings of his followers in a different manner. It is rather to be wondered at,

that there should be so general, and in all important respects, so entire a uniformity in their statements. Each one evidently set down those particulars, which most forcibly impressed, or most deeply interested him, apparently overlooking some incidents which, in turn, struck some other mind as worthy of special regard and consideration. What was omitted by one, is thus naturally and properly supplied by another—and that, without any impeachment of the candor or veracity of either.

We are fully aware that these views are not entertained by many—perhaps a majority of professing Christians. But surely, as Christians, we are under no moral obligations to believe what the Bible, the only legitimate rule of faith, never requires. And especially, when such belief involves very serious objections, and actually induces many to reject the Scriptures as a system of revelation. It may be, and no doubt is true, that unbelievers do not fully examine the Bible, for the purpose of ascertaining whether it demands our faith in its entire inspiration. But then it should be recollected that they have taken the word of those who profess to believe it, and who advocate the inspiration of every part of it, as the ground of their objections. And it remains for Christians themselves, to set the example in this work of investigation, so that the maxims of their creed may no longer be liable to these difficulties, or conse-

quences. Protestant Christians, especially, owe this to themselves, whose glory it is to approximate by all means in their power, the original purity of evangelical faith—they owe it to the simplicity of the Gospel, which originally excited none of the objections of modern skeptics, and was therefore free from those doctrines and peculiarities which have been shown to be corruptions of primitive truth—and they owe it to the world, that mankind may no longer be driven from the belief and obedience of those principles which secure and promote virtue, peace, and salvation.

And whether those who hold the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, will, or will not enter upon the examination of this subject, we venture to urge upon skeptics and unbelievers the propriety of doing so, however little they may be disposed to such investigations. Of all subjects, the study of the Scriptures is that, perhaps, to which infidels have the greatest repugnance. But certainly, many of them would be thought candid men—and as such, they would not willingly and hastily disregard any reasonable labor, which involves their own and the welfare of their families and friends. They are at great pains and expense to educate their children—for this they "rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness;" and they can scarcely feel less interest in those great truths which so deeply concern the moral feelings and conduct, and which tend to

support and comfort the sorrowful, as well as to sustain the soul in the moment of dissolution. And they can—it is believed they will devote some portion of their time and attention to even the Bible, for the purpose of ascertaining its truth, and whether all or a part only of its truths are of divine origin, and whether it professes to have been wholly written by inspiration.

But they may perhaps reply, that they *have* read the Bible—that they were brought up to read it, and when young, were accustomed to do so repeatedly. Be it so; and can sober and candid men suppose that such reading possesses any of the proper characteristics of deliberate investigation? They cannot pretend this. They probably read Don Quixotte, or Robinson Crusoe, when children—but it is presumed that they have refreshed their memories by re-perusal since they were men. And is not the Bible as worthy of their attention? They know, too, that they generally read the Bible, as a task imposed by parental authority; and that occasionally they were enlightened respecting its import, by the construction which the parent's creed imposed upon the text. It was under such auspices that both the knowledge which unbelievers generally have of the Scriptures, and their prejudices against them were formed. Under such circumstances the impression was first received, that the Bible contained doctrines, and demanded a stretch of credulity, at which reason revolts—and which

have since been rejected at the expense of the Bible itself. Thus unbelievers decide; and thus they appear to forget that they are as liable to the influence of early impressions as other persons; and that erroneous views imbibed in childhood, adhere to them as effectually as to those who retain the utmost pretensions of their fathers' creed. For they were taught to believe that the Scriptures were wholly written by the immediate inspiration of God, and they yet believe, that the Bible lays claim to that distinction.

Now what we ask of them, is, to read the Bible again, in order to ascertain whether it furnishes the evidence that its whole subject matter was dictated, and its phraseology controlled by immediate inspiration. If it does not furnish the evidence of being so written, then another ground of objection will be removed; and unbelievers be taught, that in asserting the contrary, they do injustice both to themselves and to the Scriptures. Several considerations have been offered to show, that neither the whole subject matter, nor the language of the Bible, was by direct inspiration. And we have a right to expect, if not to demand, that infidels will examine the subject, before they repeat the objection. Until they do this, they are incompetent to judge correctly respecting it; and the reiteration of their contempt for the Bible on that account, will betray a disposition to cavil, rather than a sincere desire to understand and obey the truth.

CHAPTER X.

EXTRAVAGANCES OF CHRISTIANS.

Without descending to a prolix minuteness in reviewing the causes of infidelity laid in the doctrines and opinions of Christian professors, we may yet notice one more particular relating to religious practices. We say *practices*—for there are such, which are not considered as properly under the denomination of morals, and which are yet esteemed religious. And they are termed *religious*, not that they are thought to be indispensable to religion, but because certain religionists adopt and practice them. They are of such a nature as to admit of almost every form and modification that may suit the taste of any age, or the fancy of any particular person. By them, certain communities stand apart in the great family of Christians—so that, with many other things in common, by these they are distinguished and known.

These practices have, at different times, and in particular individuals, assumed nearly every conceivable form of extravagance. And these extravagances have been the prolific sources of disgust

and irreligion. The reason is perfectly plain. For many of those who think and reason, when they see the professors of any given system, and, as they suppose, under its sanctions, acting unreasonably, will take it for granted, that the whole system and its profession are alike absurd. And we fear that the present age must answer for its full share of blame in this particular; since, with all its wisdom, science, and refinement, it has cherished and encouraged some of the most daring outrages upon the decorum and consistency of the Gospel, as well as upon the dictates of sober and enlightened reason. It has done this in the name of Christianity—and modern unbelievers have, as far as their means extended, made Christianity responsible for the extravagances of some of its devoted friends.

The mistake which lies at the foundation of both these evils—the extravagances of Christian professors, and consequent infidelity—probably, in a great majority of instances, originates in a very sincere desire to advance the interests of Christianity. But there is an error in the selection of proper means. Some are betrayed into an excess of zeal by the native warmth of their constitutions, and literally run mad in search of ways, and means, and occasions, in which to display their ruling passion. There are others who for some real or supposed wickedness, have been overwhelmed with penitence, and who on being

converted to Christianity, have felt impelled to do some very extraordinary things by way of atonement. And there are others still, for whom no such apologies can be made—who observing the general tendency of human nature to excitement, adopt a course of religious extravagance as a matter of expediency. This class justify themselves on the ground, that their religious practices involve no particular moral principles, and that they are perhaps favorable to the interests of religion.

But, without calling in question the moral integrity of any man, we may be permitted to observe, that it is believed they are mistaken in their opinions; and that a little reflection will convince them of their error. Does it involve no principle of morality, that mankind absolve themselves from the usual relations of society? It is notorious that this has been done by an immense number of hermits, monks, and nuns. Is not morality concerned, when men adopt a course of conduct at variance with all the ordinary notions of decency and sobriety? This has been done for many ages, and is now done by several sects in this country, in religious meetings held at unseasonable hours—conducted in an improper manner, and continued to an unreasonable length of time. Is not morality deeply interested, when thousands neglect some of the plainest duties of common life, under pretence of serving the Lord? And this is daily done, to the manifest injury of health,

and the great detriment of the property as well as comfort and care of families. Can it be for the interest of the Christian religion, to illustrate its profession by extravagances of which the sober believer is ashamed?—which a great majority of the youth regard as the subject of ridicule and merriment?—which turn skeptics into downright infidels?—and which terminate in a morbid reaction of feeling, if not of principles, in the devotee himself, whose "last state is worse than the first"? There are too many facts in proof of all these things, to leave any doubt or suspicion of their correctness; and whatever fanatics may think of the matter, and however pertinacious they may be in pushing their enthusiastic experiments, they have only to open their eyes, in order to discover that they are forcing a great number of persons into infidelity—and, unfortunately, some of those, whom it must be desirable to retain as the friends of Christianity.

It is no part of our plan, to tax the reader with a long detail of the extravagances which distorted the features of Christianity before the era of the reformation. When first established, it was wholly free from any and every thing of a fanatical or disorderly character; and its professors were alike distinguished for the sober consistency of their zeal, the propriety of their conduct, the decency of their devotions, and the moral purity of their lives. During the apostolic age, only

some trifling advances were made in religious extravagance. The Judaizing Christians were over-zealous for the observance of the Mosaic ritual—and the converted Heathen philosophers, showed considerable anxiety for the preservation of the principles and practices of their respective schools. As yet, however, the outrages which distinguished the Christianity of a later age, did not enter into their anticipations. But when men were canonized for living in solitude and in filth—when they received the honors of an apotheosis, because they could subsist some forty or fifty years, upon a stone pillar, exposed to all the changes and rigors of the seasons—then religious extravagance had attained its maximum, and superseded the more sober duties of common life.

The hermit eventually became a monk, the recluse exchanged his cave for the cloister, and his solitude for a community; and vows of poverty, ascetic mortifications, and idle and frivolous ceremonies, became the standard of Christian perfection. At this time, the empire of monkery was complete; and nearly the whole of visible Christianity, consisted in the rites which the church had imposed. The encroachments upon the simplicity and purity of the Gospel, were so slow and so uniform, as in most cases to pass without much observation or censure. Each succeeding age added something, either in principle or practice; and the forms of religious extravagance assumed

a corresponding modification. At one period, the fanatic was the inoffensive victim of a melancholy temperament and mistaken zeal; and who, from disgust at the ordinary forms of society, sought refuge in the cloister; but this same spirit, afterwards, led him forth in arms, to court death on the plains of Palestine, in the character of the proud, reckless, and chivalrous knight. It is difficult to imagine a metamorphosis more complete, than that which transformed the quiet, ease-taking monk, into the ever-active and daring crusader. The same spirit actuated both—it merely took a different direction. And, unfortunately, in both instances, the temper and morality of the Gospel were almost wholly overlooked or disregarded.

It seems that a total inversion of the laws of vision, takes place with many Christians, as they look at certain things, considered far off or near. Thus, all protestant Christians agree, that the religious extravagances to which we have referred, were both improper and immoral; but they do not perceive, that in whatever age they may appear, and under whatever form and modification, they are still improper and immoral. So that things in the distance, seem to be seen more clearly, than even the same, or at least very similar things, near at hand. In the retrospect of past ages, it is perceived that fanaticism led to crimes—while the same fanatical spirit is now too often regarded as the nurse of much religion, if not of

virtue. There is, no doubt, a difference in the degree of criminality which attaches to ancient and modern fanatics—but probably no greater difference than can be accounted for by the general condition and intelligence of the respective ages. What was wrong, then, in the temper and practice of enthusiasts, is yet wrong, however modified in its developments; and if the apology may now be made, that the moderns are sincere and conscientious, it may also be urged in extenuation of the fooleries and outrages of a less enlightened period.

But we are principally, because more immediately, concerned with the religious extravagances of Protestants, and with those of the present age, rather than any other. To attempt a formal history, or even an enumeration of these, in this place, is impossible; yet it is due both to believers and unbelievers, to take some notice of the prevailing fanaticism. Differing as it does, in some respects, from any and every thing of the kind which appertains to a former age, it may, however, be regularly traced through successive sects, to the visions, trances, prophecies, ecstacies, and prostrations of the French prophets, as their extravagances may, in turn, lay their elements in the blind and furious zeal of the Anabaptists of Germany.

It is by no means intended to represent, that the present actors in these scenes of moral misrule

and confusion, are aware of the affinity of their proceedings, with those of the enthusiasts here named. Much less can it be presumed, that they have any idea of doing disservice to the Christian religion. They can not even intend to copy a course of conduct, which those who know any thing of the subject, will at once admit was extremely absurd, immoral, and dangerous to the interests of the Gospel of truth. Still, whoever will compare the proceedings of certain individuals and communities, in producing and conducting what are denominated revivals, or awakenings, as well as the conduct of some sects in their usual assemblies for public and social worship, will at once perceive the workings of the same spirit that has marked every period of the church since professors turned enthusiasts.

Let the following things be duly and candidly considered—and then let certain professors of the Christian doctrine ask themselves, if it can be surprising that so many doubt, or reject the truth of divine revelation?

1. Ministers of religion profess to be specially directed by the Holy Spirit, and converts to have been instantly and miraculously illuminated by its influence—when it is a conceded point, by all sober Christians, that both the gifts of the spirit, and all other miraculous interventions of the divine energy, have been suspended entirely, since the age of the apostles.

Besides, these very ministers are neither, in general, distinguished for their talents, their attainments, or their success—nor are their converts remarkable for their religious knowledge or moral purity. Some of this class of preachers, have fallen into gross sins, some have abandoned the sects for whom they labored, and others have relapsed into that state of apathy, consequent upon undue excitement and unnatural exertion. Many of their converts have seen and lamented their delusion, others have lost the fervor of their zeal, and others still, have returned to the beggarly elements—their last state being worse than the first.

When these pretensions and their concomitants are duly considered, we must cease to wonder, that while some men run mad, others turn infidels. These are the natural and obvious extremes which act upon and influence each other, and which will only disappear, when Christian worshippers return to the simplicity of Gospel truth, to the manly temper and pure morality of the primitive disciples.

2. Religious meetings of various descriptions, have been multiplied to an unreasonable extent, so as greatly to interfere with the necessary avocations and domestic duties of families and neighborhoods. Under some pretext, nearly every day, or evening, calls certain sects to the house of worship. And there are regular arrangements

for doing this, for at least half the year. It is not the accidental interruption of a different order of things—but a systematic plan of operation for the avowed purpose of keeping up a state of intense and unnatural excitement. And in effecting this, there is not only a waste of time, but a frequent neglect of the most ordinary duties of common life—loss of health—and, occasionally, loss of reason.

3. Religious meetings are often held at unseasonable hours, conducted in an improper, irreverent, and indecent manner, and continued for an unreasonable length of time. Thus, they commence very early in the morning, are continued very late, sometimes through the whole night, for weeks in succession; and men, women, and children, mix up the service with sighs, and groans, and frantic gestures, and vociferous prayers and praise. Nor are these things the result of accident, in which some particular circumstance might both induce and apologize for the violation of ordinary rules. They are the result of previous calculation. And those who will rise at four o'clock on a winter morning, leave the care of their families, and walk half a mile to attend a prayer-meeting, are considered more zealous, if not more religious, than those who prefer the less ostentatious duty of looking to the comfort of their children and households. Those who are most obsequious to the arrogant dictation of some

master of the ceremonies, who bear with most patience his abuse, hear with most complacency his blasphemous assertions, and witness with most apparent satisfaction, the violation of all the common rules of religious order and decorum, are esteemed persons of remarkable piety. While those who can bear up under all this for some thirty, fifty, or sixty days, almost without food, or rest, or mental derangement, are regarded as furnishing unequivocal proof of their Christian calling and experience, as well as confirmation of their superior sensibility and devotion.

We might enlarge this catalogue of enormities to a great length—but the particulars named, embrace the prominent extravagances of the age, and are enough to satisfy any one, that though it is neither a time for peopling the cloister, nor yet of feats of chivalry, the spirit of fanaticism is by no means extinct. In the mean time, we admonish those Christian believers, to examine their Bibles more carefully, for the authority which can justify these things. What apostle, after the gift of the spirit at pentecost, ever fell into deadly sins, turned from the integrity of his profession, or relaxed in his endeavors to establish and spread the influence of the Gospel? When did their followers commit sin without rebuke, or indulge in fanatical excesses unreproved? When, but for the rage of persecution, were their assemblies held at improper or uncommon seasons? or when

conducted in a disorderly manner by permission? And, at what time did they so overlook or disregard the social and domestic interests of Christians, as to continue their devotional exercises from day to day, and from week to week? Finally—when, and where, do they approve of extravagance in any form, or any exercise of the mind not regulated by sober reason—any practice, that is not sanctioned by truth and virtue? Never—in no instance can an exception be found; and, consequently, all those outrages which have been named, are not only unauthorized by apostolical example, but are contrary to primitive Christian practice—fanatical and injurious to the cause of truth.

But unbelievers in general, do not appear to concern themselves about the example of the primitive Christians. They take things as they find them, and seem to presume, that, because the present age furnishes examples of fanaticism, it is proof that all others have only produced Christians with more zeal than knowledge—more pretension than piety—more enthusiasm than substantial morality and pure religion. And that these extravagances have had, and still have, their full weight in confirming them in the rejection of the Gospel, none can doubt who have given the subject any attention. So confident are they that these aberrations are the test of Gospel influences, that they speak of them as among the proper in-

dications of the Christian character; and instead of regarding a fanatic as a monstrous production in the Christian family, he is more commonly viewed as its proper representative.

Now, we deny that the spirit of Christianity is fanatical; and maintain, that it never led a single believer into any acts of religious extravagance. And this has been proved by reference to the principles, professions, and conduct of the great Master of Christians, and his immediate disciples. Some of the early Jewish and Gentile converts fell into a few of their *previous* excesses; but these were promptly disavowed and rebuked by the apostles. Fanaticism, then, among Christians, *is of Jewish and Heathen origin;* nor can an instance be produced from the New Testament, which even remotely sanctions a single extravagance in Christian practice. It might as well be pretended, that Christianity encouraged and countenanced crime, as that it authorizes fanaticism. But this, none will argue—and when the subject under remark, receives proper attention, unbelievers will learn that they have drawn conclusions respecting it without premises, and repeated assertions which remain to be proved.

But the truth is, they find it easier to sneer at the fanaticism of professors, than to ascertain whether it is authorized by the Gospel as recorded in the Bible. And we venture to predict, that whenever they will set about the examination of

the subject, in sober earnest, they will find that the extravagances of Christians, in this or any other age, have no connection with, or authority from revealed truth. To this work of investigation, they should apply themselves without delay; that by so doing, they may learn, that they have blamed Christianity for the errors and weaknesses of its friends, and that, notwithstanding these mistakes, it is altogether worthy of their faith, confidence, and obedience.

CHAPTER XI.

FALSE POSITIONS OF UNBELIEVERS.

The principal opinions, doctrines, and practices of Christians, which are believed to be so many causes of infidelity, have now been reviewed; and it has been shewn, that not one of them is either sustained or authorised by the Bible. So far, then, as any or all of these particulars are urged as the ground of objection to a divine revelation, the unbeliever places himself in a false position—since they have no actual relation to, or bearing upon, the subject. This fact must greatly diminish the *number*, if not the *force* of infidel objections, and ought to induce the inquiry, whether it is not possible that every remaining difficulty is equally unfounded. We are greatly mistaken, if the unbeliever would not bestir himself in sober earnest, and that right early, were it shown with equal clearness and certainty, that his dwelling, or his health, or his pecuniary interest was endangered by the removal of an equal number of what he supposed to be the securities on which either rested and depended. And can any man believe that his moral and social—not to say religious—

interests are of less moment, than his personal security or property? That there are such, is by no means impossible, and we apprehend that they will as readily be found among skeptics, as among any other class of mankind. Still, with the hope that such may be induced to reconsider the subject, and with a view to lighten their labor as much as possible, the several particulars already examined, will be presented in a more condensed form.

1. The Bible teaches that there is one, and only one God. And it represents him as the Creator, Preserver, and unwearied Friend of man. He is emphatically denominated the Father, as being alike the author of our being, and the moral and temporal guardian of his children. Thus in the Old Testament, while we are assured that "The Lord our God is one Lord," or Jehovah, we are also told, that "there is none else—no God besides." And in the New Testament, the same great truth is distinctly stated and enforced, that though there be lords many, and gods many, yet, to the Christian, "there is but ONE GOD, even the Father"—"ONE GOD and Father of all."

Now it is perfectly consistent, that a book claiming to be a revelation from God, should assert his existence—and equally reasonable that it should do so. And it is no less consistent, reasonable, and natural, that it should insist upon

his entire unity, and indivisibility, and almightiness, in contradistinction to the numerous deities which had no actual existence, but which were, almost every where, the objects of human faith and worship. So evident is this, that it is even now difficult to call to mind what the Heathen divinities were supposed to be, and not on the instant contrast the God of the Bible in all the plenitude of his moral and natural perfections, with their utter nothingness. And it inspires a species of reverential awe, at the awakened consciousness of his all-comprehending presence, his sufficiency and eternity. It does more than this—it impresses the mind with a strong sense of the fitness and consistency of his being and perfections, and of the reasonableness of believing in his existence and attributes.

But in all this, no human mind for a moment reverts to the possibility of his existing in three distinct and equal persons. One absolute, omnipotent infinity of mind, is conceived of and confided in, as abundantly competent to provide for and control the destinies of the universe. And this is precisely the view given of the Deity, in the Scriptures. Reason and revelation coincide in ascribing to him a simple *oneness* of person and nature. Reasonable men, then, can not object to the Scripture representation of the unity of God—and none such will object, when they perceive that they have mistaken the opinions of ho-

nest but erring man, for the Bible doctrine of the divine unity. It is just as reasonable to believe that there is a God, as to believe that a house had a builder—as reasonable to believe what the Bible says, that there is but one God, as to believe that unity is not three—and as reasonable to believe that such representation is the result of revelation, as to believe any other fact that ever yet demanded the confidence and faith of the human mind.

The skeptic, therefore, when he objects to the Bible because he takes it for granted that it maintains the doctrine of the trinity, is at fault. And the fact that the Scriptures do teach the divine unity, and that they did teach it at a time when the whole world was rioting in the darkness and pollution of Heathenism, is proof that the Bible doctrine respecting God, was revealed from Heaven.

2. The Scriptures teach, that what is called the *atonement*, consists merely in reconciling man to the Deity. Thus, it is said by an apostle who well understood the subject, that "all things are of God, who hath *reconciled* us to himself"—that is, hath *at-oned* us to himself, or made us *at one* with him. And again—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."—2 Cor. v: 18, 19. This mode of atoning, or reconciling man to his Creator, is hence made the basis of the Christian ministry: "we pray you, in Christ's stead,

be ye reconciled to God." The word rendered *reconcile*, in its various tenses and forms, is that which is *once* rendered atonement, and but once, in the New Testament, Rom. v: 11.

The following will give a perfect idea of the Scripture doctrine of atonement. A father, whose children have alienated themselves from him, and become dissatisfied with his government, may be reasonably supposed to send his only dutiful son to reclaim them and bring them home. The labor of performing this duty, may be extremely arduous—may subject him to much personal abuse and suffering; but no man in his senses, would suppose that such labors and sufferings diminished the guilt, or lessened the obligations of the disobedient to their parent. Much less would any one think that such sufferings were particularly gratifying to the father, or that they were endured in the stead of the actual transgressors.

Such, then, is the scriptural representation of this subject. Jesus declares that he came to heal the sick, to restore the lost, "to call sinners to repentance." And he does this, not by enduring the punishment of the guilty—not by imputing to them his own merits—but by teaching them the truth, and showing them the way of life and peace. And when men believe the former, and follow the latter, they are said to be reconciled to God, or to have received the atonement.

The Bible never represents that the sufferings of Christ were designed to render God more merciful, or to exonerate the wicked from merited punishment; but rather as the *natural consequence* of the duties which he performed. Thus, the Jews are said to hate him, because he rebuked their formality and hypocrisy; they persecuted, because they hated him; and Pilate put him to an ignominious death, to gratify their malignity. All this is perfectly natural and intelligible, and is evidently the view taken of the subject by the apostles. For one of them affirms, that in the persecutions which he endured, he made up "in his body, what was behind of the afflictions of Christ." By which he no doubt meant, that his own sufferings in the propagation of the Gospel, were of the same kind, and for the same object, and answered the same end in proportion to their importance. All this is perfectly reasonable and consistent with itself, and with what may be supposed of a benevolent Deity. It is wholly exempt from the imputation of absurdity, and consequently from every objection that lies against the common doctrine of atonement. The skeptic, therefore, brings no objection to the Scriptures, when he objects to the common views of atonement; and all his toil in endeavors to strengthen his position by difficulties raised from that source, is unavailing. He is in a false position, and should do himself the favor to correct his own

mistakes, before he attacks with useless weapons, the truth of divine revelation.

3. The Bible teaches that man is naturally possessed of all the physical, mental, and moral powers and capacities requisite for the belief and practice of all that Heaven has required. The prophets, the Saviour and his apostles, always address men in terms which imply such ability, and which as obviously forbid the idea that he is totally corrupt, or incapable of truth and virtue. Some, while yet entire strangers to the Gospel, were acknowledged to be "not far from the kingdom of God." And no man of unbiassed mind, can read the beautiful parable of the "good Samaritan," and not perceive and feel that the doctrine of the entire and inherent depravity of mankind is forever exploded. In that, a semi-Pagan is represented as even fulfilling one of the most important of all moral duties, and acting up to the letter and the spirit of loving "his neighbor as himself."

The Bible, then, on the subject of the moral character of man, is certainly consistent with all human experience and observation, and, consequently, with reason. For nothing can be more notorious, than that the worst men are considered capable of doing better—and they are only supposed to be culpable, because they are thus capable. And, certainly, universal experience shows that men making no pretensions to religion, and

who can not be supposed entitled to the appellation of Christian, do many things worthy of that holy calling. The Bible, then, is not objectionable on account of the view which it gives of our moral condition. Here, then, the skeptic is again in a false position. He objects to a system which has very generally obtained in the Christian church, and fancies that he shall overthrow the claims of the Bible to inspiration; when, in fact, that system has no more to do with the Bible, than with a dissertation on the distance and magnitude of the fixed stars.

4. The Scriptures distinctly assert, that every sin of every individual, will be adequately and certainly punished; and that this punishment will be inflicted on each transgressor, in his own proper person. Thus it is said, that God will by "no means clear the guilty," and that "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." These expressions are so often repeated, in almost every form of expression, that no reader of the Bible need be told that it is a Scripture doctrine, that "every one shall receive according to his works." And when the facts of Jewish history are considered, it will be seen that the punishment denounced was always inflicted, and always upon the guilty. No instance occurs—and no intimation is ever given that one might occur—in which the innocent could justly suffer in the room or place of the guilty. But we are ex-

pressly told, that "every man shall die for his own sins."

And all this is agreeable with the universal experience of mankind, and is, consequently, as unexceptionable as a doctrine of the Bible, as in the experience of life. He who would complain of the chastisements denounced in the Bible, should, by the same rule, object to the eternal laws of physical nature, which bring anguish from the touch of fire, or pain from a broken bone. The operations of the mental and moral laws of the universe, as certainly bring guilt, and shame, and self-condemnation to the doer of wrong. This is the experience of every man, and he must be a very unreasonable man who can object to a book for asserting a fact of common experience. Such objection is only made by those who, professing to adhere to the teachings of reason, blindly rush upon its everlasting truths, and fall the victims of their own delusion.

If we were to propose the character which would comprise all that is excellent, and a plan of moral government least exceptionable, it would be just that character which the Scriptures ascribe to the Deity, and that system of moral government which they affirm he maintains. And as both are unequivocally illustrated by the laws of the physical universe, and confirmed by the convictions of every mind which reflects upon the subject, no place is perceived for any reasona-

ble and well-founded objection to the Scripture doctrine of the nature and objects of punishment. To object to the principle that every stripe inflicted on the offender, is designed for, and actually results in his personal and continual good, is to prefer darkness to light. It is to attempt to reason against reason and experience, which is either sophistry or ignorance. But as unbelievers will neither admit themselves to be guilty of the one nor of the other, they will probably abandon the objection. If they do not, they will have no reason to complain if others think them pertinacious in maintaining a false position, in defiance of reason and consistency.

5. The Bible teaches that all punishment is limited in duration. This was to be expected, after learning that all the chastisements of the wicked are intended for their personal and individual good. And this fact has been fully proved from the Scriptures, as well as by experience and observation, and hence, the belief of the eternity of punishment is an absurdity. It is not merely reasonable, then, to believe that punishment is limited, but such belief is indispensable to consistency. That we are correct in this view of the subject, will appear by a few references to the Scriptures, in which the doctrine of the final termination of all suffering, of every description, is asserted in language so definite and certain, that it seems impossible to misunderstand its meaning.

Thus, "death shall be swallowed up in victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." Again—"but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." And yet again—"We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

Now a limited punishment is so obviously reasonable, when its only object is the emendation of the offender, that all men approve of its infliction. It is one of the provisions of civil society, teachers are indulged in employing it, and even parents deem its exercise perfectly compatible with the best affections of the human heart, and the utmost feelings of tenderness. When, therefore, the Bible so speaks of the retributions of eternal justice, as to show that they have a full measure and limitation, it is proved—demonstrably proved—to be consistent with reason. On what ground, then, do unbelievers object to the Scripture doctrine of punishment? Evidently on a mistake of what they teach respecting that subject. Here, then, we find them again in a false position, wrangling with a mere opinion, venerable indeed for its antiquity, and rendered respectable by the learning, talents, and piety of its advocates—but which, nevertheless, has been proved to have no authority from the Bible. But

are unbelievers, or skeptics, prepared to admit that they have been—that they are mistaken in this matter? They must do so, or bear the imputation of objecting to what they acknowledge to be reasonable. Their high pretensions to reason and consistency, should induce them to make one more effort to sustain their reputation, by abandoning a favorite theory, and receiving the Bible as a revelation from Heaven.

6. It has been shown that the Bible makes no pretensions to be wholly and exclusively written by inspiration. It claims what is consistent with the circumstances of the case, that in all matters of religion, and in whatever concerns the perfection of morals, its doctrines and precepts are of superhuman and divine origin. And we trust that good evidence of this will appear in its proper place. But so long as the Scriptures professedly contain a revelation from God, it is certainly reasonable that they should demand no more than is consistent with their pretensions. And the believer in the inspiration of the Bible, should be careful to ask nothing for it, which it does not claim for itself.

The Scriptures claim divine aid, in the prediction of future events—in the adaptation of a single system of truth and morals to mankind in all ages; and in the institution of principles which, when followed out to their results, are certain to make men better and happier. Now it is certain,

that no merely human intellect is sufficient for these things. But it is equally certain, that all these have been done by the Scriptures. And it is therefore reasonable to believe, that the principles and truths which accomplish so much, are of divine origin. The best forms of Heathenism are undoubted evidence of the highest energy of the human mind—and yet the institutions and moral truths of the Bible, are as much above these, as the heavens are higher than the earth.

The manner in which the inspirations recorded in the Bible, as well as the forms of expression in which they are delivered, constitute, in general, no part of the subject of actual revelation. Nor are these claimed as such, except in particular cases, by the inspired penmen. And this is very obvious from the records themselves; for were every part and particular expressly dictated by the spirit of God, the formal introduction of certain passages in which the Deity is said to speak, would be both unnecessary and improper. Such passages, then, carry upon their very face, the full evidence, that much of what is not thus introduced, was written *without* any special divine aid—as much so, as if the writer had merely quoted from some other author, in which case none would ever have doubted that all not thus marked was really the author's own.

If, then, the skeptic objects to the Bible on the ground that it is professedly, in all its parts, mat-

ter and manner, a divine revelation, he is again in a false position. It makes no such pretensions. And his objection, consequently, is entirely destitute of point or force. Its great and necessary truths are still a revelation; nor is it in his power to furnish even a plausible account of their existence on any other supposition. For he can not compare the highest and best systems of human invention, with the great plan of divine truth contained in the Bible, without a blush for the infidelity which made him doubt that Heaven has made a revelation to man.

7. The extravagances, particularly of some sects of modern Christians, have led either directly to infidelity, or strengthened the prejudices of skeptics against the Bible. But that book distinctly teaches, that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace;" and that in regard to Christian worship, ordinances and practices, "all things should be done decently and in order."—These extravagances, therefore, are not chargeable either to the Bible, or to the maxims and usages of Christ and his apostles. And if we make reasonable allowance for the vehement style, bold and striking imagery, and forcible action, for which the Orientals are particularly distinguished, and which mingle in all the features of the sacred writings, we shall find nothing which can be even construed to favor superstition, excitement and fanaticism. It is certain that the inspired pen-

men differ greatly from all modern fanatics, and from any who have appeared in different ages of the church, in one important particular—that of always being reasonable. Indeed, they were the very opposites of all fanatics, in their quiet and peaceable demeanor, their sober and manly zeal, and their truly generous spirit of liberality.

Besides, it is by no means true, that the great body of Christians in this, or any other age, are or were fanatics. If an overwhelming majority of men of talent, erudition and moral worth can give character to any system, Christianity is very far from being properly considered as distinguished for fanaticism. An occasional exception should no more be seized upon as a specimen of the whole, than some human deformity should be regarded as the sole index by which to judge of the just proportions and physical beauty of man. Even in this age of excitement, a few master spirits, alone, make all the noise, and perform most of the extravagances, while the great majority deplore, or despise the folly and impiety which they display. So far, then, is the Bible from giving countenance to excitement and fanaticism, that an overwhelming proportion of its most devoted friends and believers have never been led from the paths of candor and sobriety.

The objector to the Scriptures, on account of the extravagances of some few believers in divine revelation, is again in a false position. For how-

ever valid his objections against the conduct of fanatics themselves, they have no possible relation to the Bible. They do not even remotely bear upon the question relating to a divine revelation. Let him then reflect on the figure he makes in the eyes of all candid persons—sneering at the Bible because a few hot-headed believers choose to act extravagantly. It is very true, that their extravagances are absurd and ridiculous enough; but, surely, not more so than the constant vaporings of certain pretenders to reason and philosophy, who, overlooking the mass of candor, piety and morality inspired by the Scriptures, mistake rant for Christianity, and animal excitement for evidence that the Bible is not a revelation! We shall be excused for repeating, that if skeptics would vindicate their claims to candor and common sense, they must inform themselves better concerning the teachings of the Scriptures, and abandon their objections to, and overcome their prejudices against revelation, on account of the extravagances of some of its believers.

8. The Bible teaches that there is no true religion, no vital Christianity, without morality. On this subject, it seems impossible for any one who has read it with the least attention, to be mistaken. What can be plainer than the following—"To obey is better than sacrifice"—"He will have mercy and not sacrifice"—"Faith without works, is dead"—"I beseech you by the mercies

of God, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, *holy*, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." On no subject is the Bible more express, or explicit—none is probably so often asserted and so enforced by almost every conceivable form of expression. But there is so much of Heathenism yet cherished by mankind, that plain and frequent as the demand for positive virtue is, it is either overlooked, or disregarded in too many instances. We say this is Heathenism—because it is notorious that all the piety of the Heathen world, consisted in offerings and sacrifices.

Previous to the multiplication of copies of the Bible by printing, and while the Latin church withheld that book from the people, it is not surprising that rites and forms should usurp, to a great extent, the place of the moral virtues. But it is extraordinary, that Protestants, who boast of their high privilege of reading and interpreting the Scriptures for themselves, should in too many instances, follow in the steps of their pagan and papist predecessors, and divorce morality from religion. Were this not done, we should never hear it said, that this man was highly moral, but not religious; and that one, truly pious, though he falls into divers transgressions!

Skeptics, however, seem very much disposed to take things as they find them, without being at the trouble to inquire into their causes. Hence,

when some poor mistaken pietist does wickedly, not only the church, but the Bible is made to answer for his misdeeds. They forget that they are indebted to the Bible, and to an education in a Christian land and under Christian principles, for all their better notions of moral virtue. It is impossible for them to account for their moral superiority to the Heathens of Greece and Rome, in any other way. And yet they are constantly finding fault with the very book, whose instructions have alone improved their own morality. Is it not equally certain, defective as human virtue is, that the believers in the Scriptures have been as much, or even more improved by them, than unbelievers? No fact is capable of plainer and more tangible proof, than that they have. Nor is there any other method of accounting for the greater refinement and more correct morals of that part of mankind known as Christians.

Does the skeptic ever appear sensible of these facts?—does he either perceive or admit, that the Bible has thus been the instrument of moralizing mankind? We are forced to conclude that he does not—because his objections to it, founded on the vices of its professed believers, certainly imply that he considers it, in some sense, the cause of those vices; and, consequently, that the morals of mankind have rather been injured than benefited by the Scriptures. But from the quotations made—from an immense number of similar pas-

sages which might be adduced—from the superior morality of the Christian world, and even from the better notions of virtue entertained by unbelievers, than ever marked the ancient heathen world—from all these sources it has been shown, that the Bible both inculcates and promotes virtue. The skeptic, or unbeliever, is therefore in a false position, when he rejects the Bible on account of the vices of believers.

CHAPTER XII.

OBJECTIONS FROM GEOLOGY.

There are several objections brought against the Scriptures, on account of the supposed inconsistency of some of their assertions and facts, with sound science. These are, therefore, to be considered as among the causes of unbelief, and are, consequently, entitled to careful attention. And this, not only because it is an age of much inquiry, but because every age is alike interested in the truth. The cultivation of the sciences may render the necessity more obvious, of reconciling the least observable disagreements between the processes of physical nature, and the declarations of the Bible. And it is matter of congratulation to all lovers of science as well as of the truths of revelation, that the advances and improvements which have been made in the former, enlarge the resources for furnishing a solution of every difficulty in the latter. Hence the same materials which science drags up from the abysses of nature, and with which she assails the Scriptures, become, by proper application, the polished arms with which revelation extends its triumphs. The

attempt to array physical nature against the testimony of the Bible, is an effort to divorce what God hath most intimately united. They are the respective parts of an immense whole, and both contain internal proof of their divine Original. The one leads forth the mind from chance and chaos, to the presence of an all-comprehending Intelligence, whose might, and whose wisdom, and whose benignity are impressed upon every thing; and the other carries us upward, and forward to the knowledge of the dealings and purposes of that all-governing Spirit, towards the moral portion of the universe.

The discoveries which have been made respecting the structure of the earth, and the consequent improvement of the science of Geology, have been thought to furnish evidence of the incorrectness of the chronology of the Bible. This science supposes, that our earth must have existed for a much longer time than can be reasonably inferred from the Mosaic history; and that this is proved by the structure and arrangement of the different strata of rocks, by fossil remains, and by the evident indications of changes which have taken place, on or near the surface of the earth.

There is much plausibility in this objection, whatever may be its actual validity and force. And there is great danger that many will be misled by the hasty and confident conclusions which some very eminent and scientific men have

drawn respecting it. To these conclusions they seem to have been urged, by the influence of a new discovery of the elements which mingle in the structure of the earth's surface—and to which they evidently gave much more attention, than to the Scripture chronology. The appearances on which the objection is based, are all doubtless undeniable—nor need they be denied, in order to render them entirely compatible with the Scriptures. This, it is believed, will appear from the following considerations:—

1. Geology does not, and can not determine with certainty our chronology. True, it furnishes evidence of the existence, at some period, of various races of animals and species of vegetables, which are no longer known to man, and concerning which, both history and tradition are alike silent, unless, indeed, we may take the testimony of the Bible for some of them. It demonstrates, that there has been sufficient time since the "infant *earth* was rolled together," to congregate and mature the substances, and to perfect the crystalization of the different kinds and strata of rocks—to deposite and petrify the numerous and dissimilar organic remains—to expunge whole races and species from the catalogue of being, and to introduce those which were probably unknown before.

And what does all this prove? Neither more nor less, than that there has been time enough for effecting these things. But how long a period

has been required for the performance of these astounding works? The works speak for themselves—but they have never told the number of years, or of ages that were rolled by while they were in progress. "And who is sufficient for these things!" Who is prepared to say upon the authority of the evidence at his command, that even six thousand years are not sufficient to bring about every fact brought to light by the science of geology? Who is so intimate with the knowledge of the revolutions which have taken place on the surface of the earth, during the lapse of sixty centuries, as to determine with positive certainty what has, or has not been done? The utmost that the skeptic can argue from geology against the common chronology, is, that it furnishes ground of *conjecture* that a longer time has elapsed since the earth was, than is generally supposed. But conjectures and facts are different things—and it is believed that the skeptic himself would ask something more tangible than mere conjecture, from any one who should attempt to overthrow even his theory.

All history, except that of the Bible, terminates in tradition, in the middle of our chronology. And yet, that portion which comes within the range of authentic record, furnishes some extraordinary instances of physical change. Mountains have become plains—volcanoes have in some instances exhausted their fires, while in others,

eruptions have broken forth where all had been security and quiet, apparently from the creation—islands have emerged from the bosom of the ocean, and, for aught we know to the contrary, the vast continent on which we live; while, on the other hand, broad tracts of land have disappeared, and islands have sunk probably to rise no more. Populous territories have been overwhelmed with inundations, large cities have been buried by earthquakes or volcanoes, and the sand of the desert, or the ever-rolling tide of some mighty river, has engulphed the seat of empire, and the last remains of its deep foundations.

Had not authentic history brought the date of some of these facts so near our own times, are we assured that skeptics would not have disputed the history of the creation, on their authority? Should we not have been told, that some two or three thousand years were insufficient for scattering some of the proudest and most stupendous works of human skill, to the winds of heaven? Nay, that this period could not have admitted of such numerous and important changes in the state of the visible globe? And should we not, in all probability, have been carried back in the estimate of ages, to some imaginary period, many thousands of years anterior to the common date of the creation? Is it not much more than probable, that the very existence of Nineveh and Babylon had been considered among the number of

splendid fictions—a part of the creations and machinery of enthusiasm and imposture, if profane history did not sanction and sustain the testimony of the Bible? And had not Homer identified Troy with all our conceptions of fact, and Pliny, or some one else, satisfied us that Herculaneum and Pompei were above ground a few centuries since, what speculations concerning their antiquity would flash upon the pages of geologists? We should be told that the Troad would yet furnish the monuments of ancient splendor—or that Chaldea could still show a brick from the ruins of Babylon, were they not even more ancient than the Mosaic account of the creation admits. But Troy was—and Babylon is no more; and yet their very places have perished in a period less than the half of our common chronology.

In view of these facts—and they may be multiplied to the heart's content of any one—who can say positively that six thousand years are not enough for all earth's changes? Who knows the ways and means by which the aggregation of different masses may have been brought about and crystalized?—or what influence the endless modifications of seasons and climates may have exerted?—or whither the winds and the waves, or some convulsion of the earth, may have transported the products of any given place? Who is prepared to say how many races, or what particular species of animal and vegetable being were known or un-

known to primitive man?—how many, or what kinds, lived and perished before human foot pressed the vegetable productions of earth, or the race of man became sufficiently numerous and avaricious to trench upon the prerogatives of its beasts, birds, and even reptiles? We repeat, that conjecture is neither sound argument nor substantial proof, and however plausible, ought not to furnish to any mind a sufficient reason for rejecting important and well-established truth. And were the tables turned, it is scarcely probable that the unbeliever would consider a similar argument of any strength, when brought against his favorite system.

2. Geology, as a science, is in its infancy. The ashes of the distinguished men, to whose talents and industry the world is principally indebted for reducing it to a science, are scarcely yet cold. This fact deserves to be very attentively considered, before any conclusion is drawn, which, remotely or directly, shall have an unfavorable bearing upon the truth of the Scriptures. The charm of novelty is not yet dissolved respecting the developements of this interesting science; and it is highly probable that the inferences which have been drawn by some of its votaries, are extravagant. Facts may be, and often are, discolored and distorted by fancy and imagination; and those which geology for the first time brought to light, may, from their nature, number, and

magnitude, be readily supposed to impress the mind with astonishment. Nor is it perhaps unnatural or surprising, that under these circumstances it should be supposed that a much longer period was necessary for the production of visible results in the operations of nature, than more experience and observation will justify.

The scientific reader need not be told, that the process of crystalization is instantaneous. The formation of ice upon water, is a perfect illustration of the manner in which this marvellous work is accomplished. And however dissimilar the form of crystals in different substances, the process is to all intents the same. Now when the materials are properly disposed, the combinations and proportions completed, that process commences its operation. Hence, when such masses as geology denominates secondary or more recent formations, were aggregated by fire and flood, and wherever deposited, the elements of crystalization or petrifaction were instantly at work. And hence, too, what is deemed the work and elaboration of many thousands of years, or ages, may in fact, have been fully accomplished in a comparatively short period of time.*

* A case in point came under the personal observation of the writer. He was present at a funeral in the village of Sauquoit, Oneida county, N. Y., in 1822, where on account of a change in the place of burial, the remains of an individual were disinterred. The more fleshy, or rather muscular parts of the arms and lower extremities,

The conclusions drawn by geologists, respecting the earth's antiquity, from the organic remains of extinct species of animals and vegetables, though plausible, are by no means certain. The existence of these does not constitute decisive proof of the position assumed. So far from this, the most that can be inferred from them with safety, is a bare presumption that the earth is more ancient than is consistent with our chronology. But this is not proof, nor can it with propriety be admitted as decisive against the actual chronology of the Bible, or any of its well-established facts. Neither does the existence of these organic remains prove that the state of the globe was only adapted to certain forms of life and modes of being, and which could not subsist under the present arrangement of the earth's surface. Parts may have changed, and we know that they are constantly changing; and this is sufficient to account for these phenomena. Approximated species, both animal and vegetable, would find a comfortable home, where their kin-

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were completely petrified—were converted into solid limestone, from which the bones were projecting as if inserted during the process of petrifaction. Hundreds of persons were witnesses of this extraordinary fact.—But what we are principally concerned with, is, the *certain mistake* into which the speculative geologist would fall, in estimating the time necessary for the completion of this process. We have every means of knowing that these *identical limbs appertained to a living and amiable woman, only eighteen years before.*

dred of a different zone would perish. The change of a morass or fen to a permanent soil, might imbed innumerable multitudes of plants and living creatures deep in its bosom, whence, after petrifaction or carbonization, they are eventually brought forth by the wants or the avarice of man—the objects of his wonder, and perhaps the innocent cause of his skepticism. Climates themselves may have greatly changed—may have become inhospitable, where they were once congenial with races that can abide them no longer. Illustrations of this are furnished in the former and present vegetable productions of several countries—and why not in their animals? A number of causes, therefore, might have operated in the production of the whole mass of fossil remains, without materially affecting even the common chronology. For those parts of the earth which have principally furnished the geologist with matter of speculation, can scarcely be supposed to have constituted a suitable residence for man. The new-born earth might also have put forth an energy in the production of mutations from its latent resources, which by successive efforts have become partially exhausted—hence the affairs of the surface have become more permanent, and important changes, comparatively "few and far between." And when the charm of a new science shall have passed away, geology will become another link in the scientific chain of

proof, that the Bible is what it professes to be—a record of divine truth.

3. That the argument from geology against the Scriptures is not conclusive, is proved by the fact that it has not affected the faith of some of the most distinguished geologists, in their authenticity. Were there no other considerations which weigh against the skepticism built upon geology, this fact alone is sufficient to neutralize all its force. For if we must rely on the conclusions of any set of men, those of one class are as much entitled to our confidence, all other things being equal, as are those of another. And in this case, it will hardly be doubted that the intelligence, science, and acumen of the Christian, are fully equal with those of the skeptic. If, then, we allow to each an equal attachment to his respective opinions, and an equal respect for truth and candor, the matter rests, as far as human testimony is concerned, precisely where it did before geology became a science. Hence, after all that has been inferred from it, the authenticity of the Bible is untouched by its discoveries and deductions.

It will probably be objected to this, that there are some facts in the Christian history, which show that opinions are not to be decided by the credulity or incredulity of cotemporaries. And that if this were the rule by which to determine matters in controversy, the unbelief of the Jews

would be justly construed against the truth of Christianity. And so it would were the cases parallel. But they are not—it being evident in the first place, that they never examined the subject, and were consequently incapable of giving any substantial reason for the rejection of the Gospel. Whereas geology has engaged the close and devoted attention of very many, whose views were never shaken by its disclosures, and whose confidence in the Bible as a revelation from God, has undergone no change. In all instances where a Jew approached the doctrine of Christianity with apparent candor, if he did not go away convinced of its truth and genuineness, he was at least "almost persuaded to be a Christian." And it is equally probable, that when the chronology of the Bible is as diligently investigated as the developments of science, geologists will perceive the accordance of nature and revelation, and the authenticity of the divine record remain unimpeached by their most profound discoveries.

4. Geology furnishes no objection to the chronology of the Bible, however it may be supposed incompatible with that of the church. If it were admitted that the earth's duration far exceeded what is commonly supposed—if all that the geologist can contend for with the least show of reason, were granted—it would not weigh the amount of a grain of sand to the globe, against the Scriptures. Such admissions are not necessarily de-

manded, but let them be made—and what is the result? It by no means follows, that a chronology based upon the births, and lives, and deaths of successive generations of men, must comprise the whole sum of duration since "the morning stars sung together" on the organization of our system. The Bible does not inform us in any definite terms, that this period embraces the whole time since the "spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep," and brought light out of darkness, and order from chaos. The common chronology is that of man—it follows him through all the periods of his existence, from the infancy of his being down to the present time. But it takes no account of any supposable time, prior to his creation. This is the fact on which geology fastens—concerning which it draws all its inferences—and is the only one which it pretends to sustain against the Bible.

But geology becomes its own assistant in solving the difficulty which it raises. Its developments have forced the conviction upon the minds of all its admirers, that man was the last of the Creator's works. For it is admitted, that among the multitude of fossil remains, those which indicate the presence of man are the last in the scale. And this fact is in perfect agreement with the Scripture account of the creation, in which he is brought forth as the glory and consummation of the system of physical existence. "In him the chain of being is complete." As an ani-

mal merely, he is allied to every living creature of earth—as an intellectual and moral being, he is a child of the Deity. And he was manifestly set apart and distinguished from all others, by being brought forth under the last era in the economy of creation.

On the supposition that the whole work of creation was completed in a single week as we reckon time, an immense number of facts are thrown into conjunction which are not absolutely required by the Scriptures. The same general terms in which they describe the process of forming and fitting up the world, are employed with the utmost latitude in respect to duration—with a license, every way *adapted to the nature of the subject.* And can any sufficient reason be given, why this is not also true in relation to the subject under consideration? If when speaking of human life, it is denominated *a day*—if the legal covenant which endured for many ages is called *a day*—and if the dispensation of the Gospel which has already continued nearly two thousand years, is also termed *a day*—what limit may be fixed to its meaning, when applied to a subject whose periods are beyond the reach of human computation?

No reader of the Bible can have failed to observe, that the word *day* is familiarly used to designate any period of time, however indefinite, of which the writer was speaking. Hence, in the Mosaic account of the creation, the period em-

ployed in the production of any set of particulars, is denominated a day. But it does not follow from the use of this term, that the author intended to convey the idea of the exact period of time ordinarily measured by a revolution of the earth. There is a great number of passages, in which such an application of its meaning, would be destructive of all harmony and consistency in the text. And as the Christian is under no obligation to limit the word to a literal day in the present instance, so there is no obvious reason, why that meaning and no other should be forced upon his acceptance. Nor does the fact that it has generally been understood to mean merely a day in the strictest sense, oblige any individual, or denomination, to adopt that signification. Each person has the right of putting any construction upon that or any other subject, which comports with his views of consistency, or the dictates of his conscience. And this is done in respect to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, without any impeachment of the integrity of the different sects, or diminution of the confidence due to the record of divine truth.

But this use of the word day—to signify an indefinite period of time—is not peculiar to any one denomination. It has been adopted as the natural and consistent meaning of the term in its application to the creation, by some of the most distinguished men of different sects—if not as

their decided opinion, as one that was at least unexceptionable.* And when the geologist has fully removed all the difficulties which interpose between his theory and the common chronology, he is earnestly desired to test the plenitude of his prowess, in an experiment upon the language of the inspired penman. Does he want more than six thousand years for condensing the materials and completing the structure of the earth?—the first chapter of Genesis will permit him to count as many ages as are necessary for the purpose! Does he desire a succession of eras for the full development of all the processes, and the perfection of each in the scale of progression?—the same chapter grants him seven, and he can scarcely ask for more! Would he have an advance in the scale of being, from inferior to superior, from brute to man?—that identical order is laid down as the rule by which the Deity regulated his conduct in peopling the earth! What, then, does the skeptic want? It plainly is not time, nor order, nor progression, in the Scripture history of the creation. He will then excuse us for saying, that his most obvious want is—a taste and a heart for the truths of divine revelation. And he is battering his weapons and exhausting his strength in unavailing assaults upon a rock, which has

* See Drs. Good and Chalmers—Buckland, Jameison; Profs. Silliman and Mather; Bakewell's Geology, and American Journal of Science, vol. xxv, pp. 30–41.

stood, and will stand, unmoved and unimpaired, amid all the tempests of human passion and imbecility. There is around him a troubled ocean of moral and intellectual nature, which can only be hushed into repose by the power of the truth—that truth, through the instrumentality of the Bible, is, like the spirit of God at the creation, moving upon the bosom of the waters, and will yet impart quiet and peace to all their deep places and to all their bounds.

CHAPTER XIII.

ASTRONOMY.

It is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary facts which have any bearing upon theology, that the very field which is most abundant in the overpowering evidences of the wisdom, power and goodness of the Deity, should yet be supposed to comprise a mass of testimony against the validity of a divine revelation. Such however is the case; and there are not wanting those who perceive the handy-work of a God in every orb that wheels through the regions of space, and who read lessons of the divine character and perfections in the solar system, who still seem to think it incredible that a direct revelation should be made to man: As if it were less marvellous that God should create unnumbered worlds—balance them in space, fix their motions, distances and orbits, and probably people them with races adapted to their respective climes, than that he should impart needed moral instruction and the evidence of the resurrection to the inhabitants of earth. And all this, merely because to reveal the truths of the Bible to mankind, supposes the intervention of what we

term a miracle! But is any thing more miraculous than the existence, position and revolutions of the planets—the light and influences of the sun—the form, functions and faculties of man! To produce these, or any of these, was as palpable a violation of some pre-existing law, as the instantaneous healing of the sick, or the resurrection of the dead. For it should be remembered, that what we term the laws of nature were not in existence, until the system itself to which those laws are supposed to attach, was introduced into being.

1. The objection to the Mosaic history of the creation, derived from astronomy, is, that the sun, moon and earth are made the grand objects of creative energy, while the whole train of celestial constellations which deck the heavens, is for no other visible purpose than to amuse the fancy or please the eye of the beholder: Whereas, in truth, the solar system with all its parts and appendages constitutes but a mere point—an atom in the field of immensity; and all which astronomy has ascertained, might be struck out of existence, and scarcely, or not at all be missed by an inhabitant of another sphere. And that, however produced, there is no good reason to suppose that this earth was formed prior to the more important and ponderous parts of the system; and consequently, that the Scripture account of the creation is vague and absurd—especially that part of

it which makes several days and nights without the sun, the only true cause of their existence.

It should be remembered that the Bible accounts for none of the phenomena of nature—it merely in this instance, informs us of the process by which nature itself was organized. And this is done, in the terms of a language as brief as can well be imagined. It enters not into the details, nor stoops to the minutiæ which may well be supposed to have been accumulated for the production of the grand result. Nor was it necessary, that in every instance the phraseology should be strictly philosophical and technical. It was enough, that it was intelligible—and it was precisely that form of description, which so universally obtains among mankind, and which the most scientific find it convenient to use in all their ordinary intercourse with other men. Whatever, then, may have been developed by the improvements of science—whatever may have been added to the stock of astronomical knowledge, especially by the assistance of the telescope, has very little, if any thing to do with the Scripture account of the creation. A proud and imperious hierarchy—jealous of its power and apprehensive of every advance of the human mind, may have been consistent *with itself*, and with its own maxims of policy in adjudging astronomy to be inconsistent with the doctrine of the church. And we shall probably find reasons of a far different nature from

those connected with the account of the creation, for the extreme fastidiousness which the ruling ecclesiastics have betrayed respecting the subject. But it is very far from following, that the most enlarged and liberal views of astronomy, are incompatible with the Bible. Whether we shall succeed in convincing others of this fact, may be problematical; but we are fully satisfied with the consistency and propriety of the reasons which are offered for consideration.

Let any one take the trouble—for it is a trouble that few skeptics or unbelievers do take—to examine the first chapter of Genesis, and he must be extremely sharp-sighted to discover any thing especially exceptionable even to astronomical science, in the narration. The astronomer will no more deny than the geologist, that there was—indeed, that there *must* have been a time, when the process of organizing and modelling this earth, took place. And to all the purposes of the argument, it is perfectly immaterial whether it were an actual creation from nothing, or from pre-existing materials. The process is just what might be supposed would naturally occur under the fiat of Omnipotence. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is far, very far from saying that the organization of the whole physical universe then took place. And the evidence that so much was not intended, accumulates with every step we take in the procedure.

In this stage of the process, we are not told that the several parts which are subsequently and immediately named, were reduced to perfect order. The contrary is asserted in the most express and comprehensive terms. So that there is room for the operation of the elementary laws, which were finally to regulate the vast machinery of the system, before the impression of a new mandate was felt by the new-born earth. For in the next place, we are assured that the "earth was without form and void"—destitute of its harmony of parts, empty, and unprovided with its furniture of animal and vegetable existences. The sun itself, possessed not the distinctive and remarkable properties, which subsequently constituted the all-important perfection of its character. "For darkness was upon the face of the deep."

The next step of the process was as obvious as it was necessary*—it was to light up the mass of confused elements; to diffuse over the chaos one of the fundamental principles of order. "And God said, let *light* be, and light was." There is no intimation in all this, that this light was concentrated in, or poured off in exhaustless radiation from the sun. There is no known principle of reason or philosophy which obliges us to suppose that this immense centre of our system was ne-

* Whewell on Astronomy and General Physics.—Bridgewater Treatises.

cessarily luminous. It could, and for any reason that man can give, would have been as opaque as any one of its planets, had not a benevolent Deity been actuated by higher objects in its creation, than merely to make it the centre of our system. The connection between gross matter, and light, is not so manifest as to force the conviction upon any mind that they must unavoidably co-exist—much less, is it obvious, that light must emanate from the sun, and from nothing else in our world. That it does so, is plain—but it must not be forgotten that it is the combined operation of a complete system which meets our view. And there may be as much propriety in the inference of an uninformed spectator of the operations of a steam engine, that the *heat* which generates the propelling power was always where he finds it, as in the supposition of astronomy that light was always and necessarily in the sun. That the mass which constitutes the body of that luminary, was in being, is more than intimated in the previous assertion that God "created the heavens and the earth." But it was quite another thing to render it luminous—and another still, to set the whole system in motion, so as to make day and night depend upon the revolution of the earth as well as on the light of the sun.

What is there then, so very unreasonable and unphilosophical in the Mosaic history, which asserts that "the evening and the morning," suc-

cessively alternated, so long as light already existed, though the sun as a *sun*, was yet to be constituted the medium of illumination to the system? The only apparent difficulty is in the supposition, that there was no progression in the work of creation, and that the solar system was just what it now is. But we have no right to such a supposition. And if claimed in this instance, it subjects the claimant to the necessity of supposing, that every perfect machine, was always a machine, and always operated by the same principles which now govern its movements. It is to overlook the fact, that its respective parts were duly and separately arranged—designed to bear upon and influence each other, and by being put together—and put together just as it is, produces the results which were originally designed.

Thus, throughout this whole process, there is the constant appearance of order and progression—a gradual approximation to the completion of an immense plan. And there is no more good sense, or sound philosophy in denying the successive advances of the physical world to that state of perfection in which man finds it, than there would be, in denying that the human mind had made any progress in science. The astronomer may as well assert that man, six thousand years since, understood his favorite science as well as Newton—as to maintain that the moment the matter of the solar system was aggregated, its

whole machinery was perfect and in "the full tide of successful experiment." The whole process of creation as stated in the first chapter of Genesis, is precisely such as might naturally and reasonably be supposed—and is probably as consisten in all its parts and results, as the great men who complain so much about it would be likely to adopt, were the important business of fabricating a new world, entrusted to their own hands. Certainly, the conjectures respecting this matter, with which they have yet favored the world, prove that they can yet imagine difficulties in the existing system, much easier than furnish remedies by which it may be improved. And we would respectfully suggest the propriety of their finding less fault with the history of creation given in the Bible, until they are able to show, with some degree of certainty, that they can account more rationally for the origin of our world. This, they have not yet done—nor are they at all likely to do it, unless the genius of infidelity should work greater miracles with human intellect, than any which the Bible has recorded. And even were this done, it would nullify the present skepticism of the world, by converting its subjects to a belief in miracles.

2. Another objection founded on astronomy, lies principally against the Christian system as maintained by the majority of its professors: it is, that among so many worlds, and systems of

worlds, all probably peopled with rational and moral beings as well as this earth, and who may of course stand in equal need of the grace of redemption, it is scarcely probable that the Deity could condescend to visit our planet with so distinguished a favor as the sacrifice of his own and equal Son, to the exclusion of all other places of his creation. That were such a service required by the condition of the inhabitants of every orb, it would be strange partiality to pass them all by for the redemption of man, and still more strange, if he should visit them all with a sacrifice so vast as that which rescued the human race from the deepest perdition. And that if other worlds are peopled with intelligent beings, it is probable that they needed such service of mercy, as much as erring man.

There is manifestly something more than mere plausibility in this objection. And it has tasked the talents of some of the most distinguished theologians of the popular school, to furnish an adequate and satisfactory answer. Indeed, it is more than they have done. And it was the difficulty which this involved, that manifestly suggested the former antipathy to astronomy, and the consequent persecution of some of the most distinguished cultivators of that science. Few things ever have been more detrimental to the interests of Christianity, than the apprehension betrayed by the church, that "religion was in danger" from

the discoveries and labors of scientific men. It has excited suspicions that all was not right—that there must be prevarication and imposture somewhere—or that there was a consciousness of weakness altogether incompatible with the pretensions so long made, and so vehemently urged. And these impressions were not confined to philosophers alone—they spread with the progress of astronomy, and have undoubtedly induced a silent skepticism in thousands of minds, which imbibed their doubts with their views of the system of the universe.

But the difficulty is neither in the strength of the objection, nor in the talents of those who have attempted its removal. It is wholly in the *system* which they have endeavored to defend, and against which, alone, the objection possesses any force. And it is not a little surprising, that such men as Chalmers, should never appear to discover the weakness of their own arguments in defence of the common hypothesis. They teach us a lesson of humility, by displaying such great talents rather in leading us from, than to the subject; and show their success in exhibiting the glory of God in the magnitude, number, and variety of his works, instead of confounding the adversaries of Christianity with the power of their arguments.

And how could it be otherwise, while they supposed the system of redemption consisted in the

sacrifice of no less a being than one of the persons of the Godhead! Surely if other worlds have, like ours, sinning intelligences to atone for, the same sacrifice must be repeated, to all appearance, an infinite number of times! Or, all worlds except ours, must be passed by with neglect—or their inhabitants never sinned. But to deny that they have inhabitants, is contrary to analogy, and to the rational deductions of philosophy—to deny that they have sinned, will not satisfy the objector who has a right to infer so much, because man has transgressed—to suppose that God has made no provision for their redemption, is to stigmatize his character with partiality—and to suppose that his equal Son shall visit, in endless succession, every separate orb in creation, to make an infinite atonement for the sins of each, is more than any mind can presume. And it is not easy to conjecture a reason, why these things do not press upon the received system of a vicarious atonement.

Let it be admitted, then, that there are as many worlds as astronomy has ever yet imagined—that they are all peopled with moral and accountable races of beings—that these, their inhabitants, are so far like mankind, that they have all become transgressors, and need salvation, or redemption, as much as the inhabitants of this earth—and what then? It will not be denied that He who created all these, knows how to provide for all

their wants, both physical and moral. It can not be doubted, that he is as certain to make suitable provision for all others, as for our little world and its inhabitants. And as we have abundant reason to believe, that he has instituted a process for the redemption of mankind, we need feel no solicitude for the fate of those with whose condition we seem to have no common sympathy. The astronomer may, with perfect propriety, give himself no trouble about the probable destiny of any or all of the inhabitants of other worlds. Nor do his objections actually amount to any thing more than the merest probabilities. And as such, the Christian is scarcely obliged to answer them. But since he will not be satisfied without an answer—since that answer must be consistent with itself, and with the Christian system, and with sound science—it must be given, for the sake of the objector, for the well-being of those within the sphere of his influence, and for the honor and vindication of the Scriptures of truth.

It has been stated, that the objection to the redemption of man, founded in astronomical science, lay not against the Bible doctrine of grace, but against the prevailing hypothesis. This will appear from the article on the nature of the atonement. From that, it will be seen that the condition of man, bad as it is, and was, did not require the immense sacrifice of the Godhead, nor of any supposed divine person participating of underived

divinity. That an infinite sacrifice was neither called for, nor made; and that if it had been, it must be at the expense of justice, mercy, and truth. That the imputation of our crimes, and guilt, and punishment, to the Mediator, could not alter the temper of our minds, nor so improve our moral condition and character, as to render us worthy of our high destiny, or fit for the communion and fellowship of good spirits in the mansions of the blessed. In fine, that the Scriptures, instead of teaching such a system for our faith, taught a very different one, and one more consistent with the acknowledged attributes of God, and much more congenial with the condition and moral wants of the human race.

According to the Scriptures, the Saviour promised, was to be the offspring of one of the Hebrew patriarchs; and every prediction antecedent to his actual appearance, supposes him to be a divinely inspired man. From the New Testament, we learn, that while he claimed to be the Son of God and the Messenger of truth and grace, he called himself the "Son of man." His chosen apostles—the companions of his public ministry, and the witnesses of his miracles—denominate him "a man approved of God," "the man Christ Jesus," "the seed of Abraham," and who could be "tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin." He is familiarly styled "the high priest of our profession," "who could be touched

with the feeling of our infirmities," and is uniformly represented as feeling our common wants, partaking the common sympathies of our nature, and suffering and dying like the rest of mankind. All this is utterly inconsistent with the notion that he was a self-existent God. The Deity partakes of none of the constitutional infirmities of man—can neither bear our form, feel our kindred sympathies, nor suffer any of our sorrows, or pains—nor die.

Hence it appears, that the Messiah, the Redeemer of lost man, was raised up from among men—a dutiful, and obedient, and affectionate son, sent with his Father's message of love to the rest of his family of erring children, not for the purpose of bearing their punishment—not to win for man the favor of his God—not to satisfy an offended and violated law for others—but to teach men truth, illustrate every virtue, and excite and confirm the hope of the resurrection. And what God has thus done for man, he can, and obviously will do for all other conceivable moral beings. He secured the redemption of this world, by means of resources which were at his disposal among its inhabitants. And for the people of every orb in the universe, he can perform a similar service, if necessary, and by similar means.

Where now is this mighty objection of astronomy, to the doctrine of redemption? Is it incon-

sistent with that science to suppose, what Christianity assumes and teaches, that men were transgressors—that Jesus came divinely inspired and empowered to call them back to the practice of virtue? Is not such a system of religious truth consistent with itself? Is it not also in perfect accordance with the testimony of the Bible? And if all this is done for the inhabitants of this world, what is there in it that is incompatible with the belief, that a similar work may be wrought for the inhabitants of every world in the field of astronomy? And if it was a part of the plan of divine goodness to soothe us under our afflictions, to mitigate our sorrows by giving the proof of the resurrection of the dead, what is there in the belief that the Deity may confer a similar blessing, by similar means, on all supposable intelligent mortals, so inconsistent with the deductions of astronomy? The Christian thanks God that such a revelation has been made, and enters by prelibation upon the blessings and glories of immortality. The greatest astronomer who ever honored that science or human nature by his discoveries, and by the improvements which he made in the system, was a Christian. And his views of the character of Jesus, and in consequence, of the nature, and duties, and objects of his mission, made him both the first of astronomers, and a consistent Christian. Such was

Newton,* and such will those yet be, who, like him, read the lessons of divine wisdom and goodness in the heavens, and in the earth. He never blamed the Bible, because it gave him no information respecting the laws of attraction and gravitation, nor called in question its authenticity because it did not inform him whether the most active agent in the elementary constitution of the earth, was fire or water. And let a similar humility direct his followers, and astronomy will become the handmaid of revelation.

It should not be overlooked, nor forgotten, that the Bible makes no pretensions to any science—save that of religion. That, in all its modifications and bearings, as a revelation from God, is its only theme—exclusive of the history of the extraordinary people by whom, and through whom it was made. And when compared with the systems of religion which all other works have ever proposed, which have prevailed in any age or country, it alone appears worthy of its di-

*Newton was constrained to reject the doctrine of the trinity and a vicarious atonement: and believed in, and wrote largely on the subject of, the Divine Unity, as well as in favor of the Christian system. How much he was influenced in his opinions respecting the character of Christ, by his discoveries in astronomy, does not, that we recollect, distinctly appear; but it might be well for others to consider his views of theology with more attention, before they reject Christianity as incompatible with astronomy.

vine Original—worthy of the adoption of the beings for whom it was intended. The God whom it presents to our devotions, the purity which it requires in his worshippers, the hopes which it inspires in the breast of the believer—all tend to improve the character of man, and render him more and more worthy of the high place which he holds in the system of being. And the more the heavens and the earth are scanned—the more the harmony and adjustment of the system of the universe are studied—the better the constituent elements of physical nature are understood—the more obvious and convincing will become the great and fundamental truth of the Bible, that "in the beginning, GOD created the heavens and the earth."

CHAPTER XIV.

BIGOTRY OF UNBELIEVERS.

That state of mind which, without knowing particularly why, is inveterately and obstinately opposed to any and every thing not congenial with its own views, is called bigotry. And whoever exhibits the dislikes and prejudices of such a mind, is denominated a bigot. One of the most full and perfect illustrations of this unamiable character, is furnished by the Jews, as their history has come down to us in the New Testament. They appear to have considered every thing odious and detestable, which did not entirely quadrate with their own opinions and practices. And they carried this feeling to the extreme of hating even the *persons* of those who ventured to dissent from their own views. This was the prominent cause of the wide and marked distinction between themselves and other nations—and certainly of the unrelenting persecutions which they waged against the primitive Christians.

It is not extraordinary that persons who sincerely and devotedly believe in any system of religion, should become unreasonably tenacious of

their own views, when they are supposed to involve their own and the best interests of other men. But it is a surprising fact, that those should ever fall into the lowest depths of bigotry, who turn all devotion into ridicule—who treat the Bible as a vulgar jest—the miracles of Jesus as the tricks of imposture, and morality itself as a mere matter of convenience. And yet, nothing is more common than this excess, in those who make no pretensions to religion. With them, it is an extravagant prejudice which fastens upon a theory that professes unbounded liberality. For skeptics avow an utter indifference to the place or form of truth, if so be that they can find it. And while they do not pretend to have made the discovery with certainty, they generally treat all religious opinions as untrue. Now this is bigotry, sheer, downright bigotry, under its worst form. And it has assumed a great variety of aspects, in the exercise of its might and influence over man. But in this case, it is wholly without excuse—without even the semblance of an apology. For it does not allow its victims to feel assured that even their own views of religion are right. They may suppose that all others are wrong—but they can scarcely feel *confirmed* in a system of universal doubt and uncertainty.

The man who sincerely believes, and who deeply and devoutly feels that his religious creed is true, and that it involves his own happiness or

misery, and that of his fellow-men, has some apology for the tenacity with which he maintains his opinions, and for the prejudices which he cherishes against every deviation from his standard. He is at least sincere in the belief that he is right, and conscientious in the very dogmatism with which he assails the opinions of all other persons. Besides, his integrity will, in many instances, lead him to acts of real liberality. For as his confidence in the strength of his position is unbounded, it renders him fearless, and he will manfully, and in general, civilly—certainly with some degree of dignity—listen to the assertions and arguments of opposers. Every step that he has advanced in general knowledge—especially in the knowledge of men—will be visible in the degree of candor and charity with which he regards those who, in his estimation, have fallen into great and even dangerous errors. But this is not all: the Christian religion, under every form in which it has yet been believed, has never been so perverted or misunderstood as to lose the whole of its moral power. Its great and prominent requirements, have never been entirely overlooked. The command to have "compassion upon the ignorant, and them that are out of the way," has diffused an angel's benignity over many a fiery spirit, and shielded many a heretic from legal condemnation. It was this that gave the first effectual impulse to that mighty revolution of mind, which, in its pro-

gress, has given security to every sect, and expunged from the list of human enormities, the atrocious cruelties of the Inquisition. Civilization did it not—science and arts did not do it—commercial enterprize and intercourse did not accomplish this desirable work; and could they have effected so much, Greece, and Rome, and Egypt, and Chaldea, had granted to man the rights of conscience. The most indulgent and catholic, the least censorious and intolerant among men, is the enlightened and devoted Christian.

Skeptics and unbelievers affect to look with great abhorrence on the bigotry which they still think prevails among Christians—which sometimes prevents them from reading infidel publications. And they seem at a loss to find adequate terms in which to express their utter abomination of such unparallelled meanness. They are scandalized that beings claiming kindred with men, should feel so self-satisfied with their own opinions, and especially with the belief of the Gospel, as to overlook or reject the means which are proffered to dispel the charm of, what they are pleased to call, superstition. And they unceasingly ridicule and contemn the determination manifested by many, of discountenancing the propagation of infidelity through the press. They are indignant that skeptical or infidel works are not placed by the side of the defences of Christianity—that

Hume and Gibbon do not always find a place with Lardner and Paley—that Volney, Voltaire, and Boulanger, are not found always in the company of Berkeley, Porteus, and Halyburton—and that Paine and Palmer, are not side by side on the same shelf, with Watson, Leslie, and Jenyns. Finally, they seem impatient that heads of families, of whatever creed, do not incline to substitute Taylor's Diegesis, or some yet more imbecile and indecent offspring of unbelief, as the household guide, instead of the Bible—or at least, as assistants in the direction of the mind of youth.

Now, that there is considerable bigotry among Christians, is undeniable—and that it may have sometimes become excessive in contemning infidel productions, is quite probable. But for a part of this, however offensive the fact may be, unbelievers must thank themselves. They have so often, so unnecessarily outraged the feelings of sober and sensible Christians, by treating their opinions with unbecoming and unfeeling levity, that charity has been turned into disgust. The institutions of Christianity have been made the theme of low punning and vulgar wit—the claims of the Bible to respect, and of its doctrines and precepts to the veneration and acceptance of mankind, have been attacked with hollow and pitiful sophistry and sarcasm—the hopes of the resurrection, so soothing to the mourner, have been assailed as the dream of ignorance and fanaticism,

and rendered the butt of scurrility and derision. These things neither admit of denial nor palliation. They have not been provoked, nor, in general, retaliated. Of all the men in this world, the patriarchs of infidelity have been most successful in imparting their own peculiar spirit to all their followers. For, from the "courtly smile" and "solemn sneer" of the leaders of the host, down to the lowest and foulest joke of the most ignorant pretender to skepticism, one spirit of congenial sarcasm pervades the whole. The finger of Omnipotence fixed not a deeper and more indelible mark upon Cain, than the genius of infidelity has impressed upon the mind of its votaries in every generation. Sarcasm, polished or rude, according to the skill of the person using it, is the alpha and omega of every skeptic in every argument—in every publication against Christianity.

In view of these facts, can the unbeliever wonder that there are those who do not, and who will not read his writings, or converse with him on religious subjects! The buffoon himself, has long since been driven from respectable society, and there is no reason why buffoonery should not be expelled, at least from all participation in the discussion of serious subjects. And the skeptic will do well to consider, whether what he terms bigotry in the Christian, be not, in reality, a very *natural and a very proper* disgust at the ill-timed

and ill-mannered witticisms perpetually thrust into every discussion of Christianity! It is time that infidels understood that some respect is due to the opinions and the feelings of other men. And they have, by disregarding these, provoked both severity and contempt, of which they have no right to complain. But under every provocation, there is scarcely a work in defence of Christianity, which descends to the use of mere jesting in the conduct of the argument. Infidels have been answered on every position, in the most dignified and unexceptionable terms. And the balance of courtesy is a thousand-fold in favor of the Christian argument, notwithstanding the occasional severity with which it is tempered.

When men complain of the remissness or imperfections of others, it is fair to presume that they are not guilty in the same particulars themselves. How, then, stands the case, in the affair of bigotry between Christians and unbelievers? Are those who complain so much and so loud, of the bigotry of Christians, immaculate in this matter? Does their actual liberality keep pace with their profession? Do they examine the Bible, and are they careful to read the arguments of those who have written in defence of Christianity? And if they have done these things, how does it happen that they have never yet replied, and seem not likely to reply, to the labored and candid defences of divine revelation?

To these queries, and others of a kindred nature, there is but one answer—they have done none of these things, nor are they disposed to do them. All obligation to investigate the subject in controversy, seems to be supposed to lie on the side of the Christian. For unbelievers certainly excuse themselves from any very arduous labor of the kind. Some of their most daring champions have acknowledged that they wrote without being in possession of a Bible—and some others have given little evidence that they used one. And in a great majority of instances, where objections have been fastened upon some of its passages, it was effected by abstracting the particular text from the subject, and from the general scope of the inspired penman. One standing evidence that they do not examine the Scriptures for themselves, is in the fact that they adopt some favorite view of them, as the basis of every objection. This they would not and could not do, were they to enter in earnest upon an investigation of the subject, and carefully compare the creed with the record of truth.

Another fact is deserving of notice. If, in the protracted controversy which has been carried on between believers and unbelievers, much attention had been paid by the latter to the Scriptures, we should somewhere be able to trace the indications of their industry, in their works. New views, new positions and arguments, new inferences, or

the abandonment of some as untenable, which had been used in vain by others, would have been the natural, the unavoidable consequence. For the human mind never, in different ages and in a large number of individuals, pursues the same train of thought, or adopts, without variation, a given set of ideas. But there is no evidence of any material deviation from the beaten track, in all the works of unbelievers. They have followed each other both in matter and manner—raised the same objections, cracked the same jokes, and repeated the same laugh, with as much precision as a patent clock-making machine would turn off any given number of wheels of the same shape, size, and description. Let him who doubts the correctness of all this, turn his attention to the defences of Christianity and of the Bible, which have appeared at different times, and he will there discover traces of the most indefatigable industry. He will perceive that the field of vision has been opened and enlarged on every hand. What was weak and untenable, was conceded; while a long train of new and irrefragable arguments were accumulated and brought to bear upon the fabric of infidelity, with irresistible might.

And why has not an effort more worthy of intellectual beings, been made on the part of unbelievers? They do not mean that the subject is unworthy of some regard—they can not complain that they have, in all instances, been treated with

unbecoming disrespect—and they will not pretend that some of those who have defended the authenticity of the Bible, are unworthy of an answer. They can scarcely believe that their objections were *so* formidable as to defy all attempts at reply—or that when themselves are attacked, they are invulnerable. And as they have alike disregarded the objections to their own theory, the defences of the Scriptures, and the Bible itself, we have a right to seek for the cause where it may most probably be found. They are in general unacquainted with the arguments of those who have published any thing in defence of a divine revelation. The sources whence the proofs of the authenticity of the Bible are drawn, are obviously unknown to the majority of infidel writers. Hence they neither see nor feel the difficulties and precariousness of their own situation, nor appreciate the amount of obstructions which lie in the way of their success.

And why is this? The answer will be best obtained by requesting an unbeliever to read the Bible, or any given work in vindication of its heaven-derived authority. Take Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel history, and it is too voluminous—they shall never find time to wade through its numerous and heavy quartos. Take the Minute Philosopher of Berkely, and they do not like the dialogue form—you may leave it, however, and if convenient, they may give it an examina-

tion. Thus the size is too great or too small—the style too stiff or too quaint and familiar—or they have not time or temper to perform the labor. They have no heart for such reading—no desire for better or further information on the subject—their collections of books never include those against infidelity, nor do their studies in one instance of a hundred, ever lead them beyond the pages of some favorite unbeliever.

And what is this?—what the name and character of this procedure? It is bigotry—the bigotry of infidelity. It is neither contempt of the works of Christians, nor disgust at the treatment they have received in the replies which have been made to their more prominent authors—for they know not what these really are. And the Bible, they have conceived a prejudice against it—they have no taste for its instructions, no confidence in its doctrines, no veneration for its precepts, no belief in its truth. Hence, while the unbeliever expects all others to show their liberality in reading his productions, he himself sits quietly down without attempting to convince the world of his own catholicism, except by a professed indifference to all religious opinions. If bigotry is disclosed by its influence—if illiberality is the index of its presence, and that illiberality precludes the examination of both sides of the question in controversy—then is there bigotry among infidels. And for the same reasons, there is more of bigo-

try in infidelity, than in Christianity; inasmuch as Christians know and answer every objection to the Scriptures.*

*See Minute Philosopher, (Berkeley,) Dialogue 2d, Section 11th, *et passim*.

CHAPTER XV.

RESPONSIBILITY OF UNBELIEVERS.

There are probably few persons, who do not suffer themselves to be deceived, in respect to their views of the influence which their opinions and practices may have over others. And there is, consequently, a similar liability to mistake the nature of human responsibility. For to say nothing of the deep-felt consciousness of responsibility to some higher power—it must obviously be graduated to man, by the ratio of influence which we may exert over him for good or for evil. And there is certainly something due to ourselves—to the high place which man holds in the scale of being—to his own character for moral perception and intelligence. So that were he isolated from his species, we still expect him to think and act like himself—like a man.

Men may be, and often are excessively indifferent to their own interests and those of others—but they can not absolutely wish to subject themselves to all the inconveniences of ignorance, inattention and vice. And from the nature of human feelings and attachments, they are never entirely reckless

of the welfare of their friends. Such however is the astonishing effect of habit, that, like inconvenient fashions, even deformities become unexceptionable. And thus it is with the moral caprices of mankind. However ridiculous, or stupid, or mischievous the moral habits and opinions of any one individual may be—there are always persons enough, who are ready to imbibe them, and in turn exert a new, and yet greater influence in their propagation. We need not confine our search for matter of illustration to any Christian sect, however extravagant; fresh and numerous examples abound among skeptics and unbelievers in every age and country. For insensible as the infidel may be to the light with which he is surrounded, he will probably retain sufficient influence to induce some one to shut his eyes with equal resolution. And this, not because there is truth and consistency in the procedure, but because there are young, or confiding, or untaught minds which can be charmed with singularity and absurdity. To such, it is no inconsiderable inducement to affect disregard for public opinion with unyielding perseverance, because it displays their spirit and gives them notoriety.

1. Were we to meet a man groping about with his eyes shut, we should not hesitate to advise him by all means to open them as soon as possible. We should tell him, that he owed the effort to himself, to his friends and to community. And

that he was depriving himself of the benefits and enjoyments of seeing—and others, of all the usefulness of which he was capable. It is true, that such advice though it implied as much—would not absolutely prove that he could see; or if he could, that he would perceive only the same objects in every instance which were seen by others. But it would prove that they thought he would be immediately and greatly benefited—that he would escape many personal dangers and sufferings—that he would find an immense number of means of enjoyment, of which he could now form no possible conception—that he might be vastly more useful in society, and add one more to the number of those whose personal influence tended to the mitigation of human wo.

But this same man may be supposed, to keep his eyes closed, all this time. And it is not beyond possibility, that all your urgent suggestions, arguments and entreaties may prove unavailing. He may in defiance of all you have said, or can say, instead of opening his eyes, or using one effort to do so, reply—"I see nothing, indeed there is nothing to see. It is true, most people seem to think that I am in the dark; but so long as I am satisfied with my condition, it is no concern of theirs. They tell me of a thousand strange things about light and colors, the appearances of the earth and the heavens, and of the aspects and expression of the human countenance, concern-

ing which my *senses* furnish no evidence, and which I shall never condescend to believe without proof to my own satisfaction. And from all that I have *experienced*, I have come to the conclusion that this great parade about my blindness and their sight—my misfortune and their privileges and enjoyments, is mere jugglery, a trick of imposture which they mean to carry by majority. For my own part, I am out of all patience with their pretensions, and shall stop my ears against hearing any more on the subject. And in the meantime, I intend to leave them to settle their superstition in their own way—except by occasionally endeavoring to convince them that they are a set of hypocritical knaves, or the dupes of such, and that they can never be otherwise till they adopt my opinions, pursue my course, and become *philosophers*."

It is difficult to suppose that such a person can be earnest—but if this be admitted, it will be inferred that he is not in his right mind, or that he has unfortunately become a fanatic to his theory. But you have no alternative in this matter. He will not admit either one, or the other—but on the contrary, he insists that he alone is in his right mind, and wholly exempt from fanaticism. And he is to be treated as a reasonable being, with all his feelings and attachments, influences and responsibilities about him.

Such in many respects, is the situation of the skeptic, or unbeliever. He is surrounded by those,

who verily believe him to be in darkness. They insist that they now enjoy higher privileges, richer mental blessings, purer moral feelings, and more—infinitely more comforting hopes, than can be understood or appreciated by one who denies a divine revelation. And how does he dispose of these things? Just as the blind man does of the most urgent entreaties that he would open his eyes. He perceives nothing, and therefore concludes there is nothing for any one to see. Nor will he condescend to make a single effort, from which he can expect, or reasonably hope for the least mental or moral illumination. His reason is the eye of his soul, by which he will not question, it is his duty to test and determine the importance of every proposition. But does he employ that noble faculty? Has he done it, in the process that has led him to his present proposition—to the attitude in which he stands? Does he yet do it, or has he ever done it, as he would have others in reference to himself and his opinions? No—never. Nor has he *originated* one-half of the objections to a divine revelation, which he urges with such pertinacity, and confides in with so much assurance? In a vast majority of instances, these have been transmitted to him from infidel predecessors, or derived by him from some skeptical publication. These have been—these still continue the only sources whence his reasoning takes its direction, its color, and its character. On these

all his arguments are founded, to them, they are inseparably bound.

Now it is plain, that he who can not originate every objection to Christianity, is also incapable of discovering all the answers and arguments which reason will and must approve, in its defence. And hence, on the ground of his own experience and practice, the unbeliever is bound to examine both sides of the great question at issue. He owes this to his own understanding—to the improvement and correctness of his reason. For on the supposition that his reason would have been imperfect without the assistance of infidel works, what right has he to presume that it is correct and infallible, without the further aid of the Christian argument? He despises the Christian as a bigot, who will not examine the objections to revelation; and ridicules his pretensions to reason in matters of religion, who has confined his researches to the doctrines of the sect of his adoption. Let it be admitted then, that such a mind is but imperfectly and partially enlightened, and that the Christian is responsible for every degree of ignorance and intolerance which adheres to such a course. And what then? Is the Christian alone responsible for his intellectual offences at the judgment seat of reason? Or is he the scape-goat on which the mental aberrations of skeptics are to be laid, and borne away into oblivion? Neither. Whatever his responsibility is—

it is as great and as obvious in the unbeliever on the other side of the proposition. If he reasons exclusively on the objections to revelation—if he refuses to examine the answers to those objections, and the arguments for Christianity, he is plainly liable to the charges which he hurls against others, of inveterate prejudice and blind partiality. For thus doing he knows not, and can not know the strength or weakness of his position—whether his opinions are right or wrong, or whether his reasonings are correct; or warped and perverted.—And whether he is aware of these things or not—whether he has ever heard or thought of them or not—whether they affect him or not, is quite immaterial to the truth and propriety of the conclusion, that he is deeply responsible to his *reason*, and bound to purify it from prejudice and enlighten it with every accessible means of truth.

2. But the responsibility of the skeptic, or unbeliever, does not terminate in his obligations to his own mind. He is a man—with all the feelings and wants incident to other men. He must suffer where they suffer, and he must be sustained—if sustained at all, by the same means and influences which support them. He is not only liable—but actually subject to all the cares, perplexities and disappointments which fall to the lot of other men; and he seeks for such relief under them, as in his judgment is best calculated to effect the mitigation of those he can not cure.

And he is like all others greatly concerned and interested to know the best means of acquiring and supporting a reputable character, and of securing the enjoyment of rational happiness.—These facts would seem too evident to require argument or proof. Nor would either be required, were it not that they involve in the present instance a train of responsibilities, in some respects peculiar to unbelievers.

As a general truth, the foundation of a good reputation is laid in personal integrity and virtue, illustrated in all the affinities and intercourse of man with man. It may not always be the immediate pass to distinction, but it is the only criterion of honorable and enduring fame. In proof of this it is only necessary to institute a comparison between King Alfred and Richard III—between Cardinal Woolsey and Howard the philanthropist, and between Bonaparte and our own Washington. This comparison may be extended to an indefinite length by the reader, and continued through every period of correct history. It may comprise in its scope, both Heathens and Christians—I should perhaps do so, in order that the universal sense of mankind may be taken on the relative worth of human character. Everywhere, in all ages, and under all varieties of condition, it will be found to rest in final approbation of the good and upright man. It concerns the skeptic or unbeliever personally then, to be fully

acquainted with the best principles and maxims of practical virtue; and it is no less important, that the highest possible motives to their observance should be understood and appreciated.

But neither the light of nature, nor infidelity under any of its forms and modifications, has yet furnished either the best moral rules for the regulation of human conduct, or the highest and most effectual inducements to obedience. Nor need we go out of our own country for the evidence, that morality is generally considered by unbelievers, as mere matter of expediency—an accommodation of the practice to the prevailing taste and habits. The motive then—the prominent inducement to the practice of virtue, is reduced to the single point of public opinion. And if that opinion can be deceived—if the public eye can be avoided, where then is the motive to virtue?—There is none! Doubtless, there is much deference due to public sentiment—and every man is to be honored for the respect which he yields to its authority. But its influence should be suspected, when it becomes the invariable rule of human actions—and that morality must be of a very doubtful character, which is exclusively founded upon its sanctions. To fix the principles, and to ensure the practice of morality, higher and more worthy motives must influence the mind.

It is too well ascertained, to admit of confident denial, or successful contradiction—that the only

true morality is inculcated by the Bible. For if it were admitted that the dictates of reason were sufficient to lead men to the very fountain of moral purity, still it must also be admitted, that by the mere light of nature, no people under heaven ever yet made the discovery. It can scarcely be supposed that the Hebrews could have done so, while the polished and philosophising Gentiles made for ages, no approaches towards correct principles or unexceptionable practices. And were it contended that the Jews had sufficient sagacity to discover without divine aid, the system of morals which they have transmitted to us—it would imply their immense superiority to all other people. This no skeptic would willingly admit. But he is denied even this consolation—for they constantly affirm that they received it by revelation.

Hence, on the ground of public opinion alone, the unbeliever is responsible for his conduct—for his perception of right, and for his views of morality. If he wishes to be respectable in the eyes of his fellow-men, that wish can only be gratified by a virtuous life. And as he has no reason to suppose that the mere influence of public sentiment will sustain him in every trial of his integrity, he is further responsible *for his views of the motives* calculated to support and direct him, when this pole-star of his philosophy fails. What the compass is to the mariner, the Bible is to the moralist. And its sanctions sustain him in his

course of uprightness, when all other motives lose their power. For there he perceives, that though every mortal eye may be closed, and all human opinion may be indifferent to his actions, there is the eye of a Father—his own Father—upon him, by whose laws he is bound to conduct like a moral and rational being. And he owes it to human nature to inform himself of the morality of the Bible—to understand its superior claims to his adoption, and to acquaint himself with the enduring motives which it furnishes to a life of virtue.

But the unbeliever has still other personal responsibilities. He is a man, and feels and suffers like other men. And when perplexities throng in his path—when sickness stays the career of his thoughts, and lays him down to ruminate upon the past, the present, and the future, or when sorrow puts forth its might, and touches his very heart, how is he sustained? Above him, and around him, he sees no intelligent providence—no skilful and powerful hand, that can open his pathway, and which, by the aids of its own energy, can enable him to bear up in the full possession of his soul, while waiting for emancipation from the toils with which he is surrounded. And if he turns his eye back upon the past, he reads the history of a solitary wanderer, an isolated member of a numerous family, who has forgotten and forsaken his Father. He now feels the utter

helplessness of his condition. Death, the tyrant of the living, stands before him in all the array of terrors—for he comes to close up the account of life forever; and there is no succor, no rescue, no reprieve. And in prospect—what a prospect! the cold, silent grave—a sleep that "knows no waking"—an utter extinction of being! Nor then, nor over the grave of kindred or friend, does hope yield any mitigation of his wretchedness, or mingle one ray of light with all his gloom. To be, was his only privilege—the very wish to be again, accumulates around him a deeper darkness, and an unavailing despair.

From the Bible, the Christian learns those truths which greatly alleviate the cares and sorrows of life, and which most effectually disarm death of its mightiest terrors. It teaches him that every moment of life is under the guidance, supervision, and guardianship of an intelligent and benevolent Providence; and that in the darkest and most trying scenes through which he may be called to pass, there is a latent good to be developed, of which he shall finally be the recipient. He may not be able to comprehend the means or to understand the process by which such a result is to be brought about. But arguing from what is known and obvious, he concludes that the general plan is still in progress, whatever may be the ways and means adopted for its accomplishment. These considerations give him a fortitude to en-

dure, and a patience and serenity under the load of human sufferings to which the unbeliever is, and as an unbeliever, must be forever a stranger. He does not see how this great difference in mind can consist with a perfect similarity of situation. But perhaps he may form an idea from the situation of two children—the one perpetually conscious of the economy of an affectionate parent; the other left to buffet the storms of life, insensible to a father's care, counsel, or protection.

From the Bible, also, the Christian draws the evidence of those facts on which are founded the hopes that comfort him in his sorrows, and sustain him in death. He takes a last farewell of his kindred and friends, with the full assurance that they shall meet again where separation shall be no more—where life shall be exempt from suffering, and from sorrow forever. And he looks down into the grave opened for himself—and through its deepest gloom he sees death its only and final occupant. And he yields himself to the victor, now satisfied that he shall rise from the dust a conqueror, "through him that loved us."

And does the unbeliever fancy that he is under no responsibility for his contempt of these things? A rash or undutiful child may feel none, for his indifference to the commands or the benefactions of a parent! But is he therefore under none? Certainly, unbelievers have too much good sense to doubt that every such child is abusing his own

privileges, insulting his benefactor, and meriting the sufferings which he daily endures. We are not now arguing respecting the authority of the Bible—we speak of it as it is—the fountain whence flows to the Christian, the strength that supports him in his trials, the comforts which soothe him in his sorrows, and the light that sheds a radiance and a glory over the "shadow of death." And the unbeliever knows that this book is accessible to himself—and he is urged and entreated to look into its pages, to sit down to the sober and dispassionate consideration of its contents—and yet he will not do so, because he does not already believe them, and because he is pleased to think that he is under no responsibility for his omission. But he is responsible as a thinking being; and he can not sustain the reputation of a philosopher, or a man of candor, until he tries the correctness of his philosophy by the moral principles of the Bible, and his reason and candor by the arguments in defence of a divine revelation.

3. The unbeliever is responsible for his opinions and practices, to every individual within the sphere of his influence. It is a common proverb, that such or such a man "is only his own enemy." But it is a common error, for nothing is more palpably untrue. And he who traces causes up to their legitimate consequences, will feel himself compelled to admit its absurdity. Particular actions may indeed bring down immediate, and

alarming, and visible results upon their perpetrator. But no fact is more universally sustained, or in general better understood, than that serious and long-lasting consequences attach to others who are involved by kindred or condition in a given transaction. Take the drunkard for an example—of whom it is too often said, "he is his own worst enemy." Follow him to what is called his home, read in the face of his suffering and helpless wife and children, the tale of his folly and his unkindness, and his degradation, and then ask whose enemy he is? Who is the enemy of that wretched household? Who has blanched the cheek of her who smiled upon her infant charge, till want and shame changed smiles to tears, and stamped upon the face of peace the features of despair? Who did all this?—One who felt no responsibility to others, for his opinions and actions! One, who claimed the right of treating with contempt or indifference the arguments, the entreaties, and even the example of his friends!

All this, the unbeliever perfectly understands. He comprehends the nature and the force of the connexion which, in defiance of mere opinion, binds the consequence to the cause, and makes the drunkard responsible, whether he will or will not acknowledge his obligations. It is by no means intended to insinuate that the infidel is a tippler, or a sot. But he is bound to society by the same ties as other men, and is as certainly re-

sponsible for what he thinks, and says, and does, as any of the human race. And with his permission, we will now accompany him to his home, and see what is passing there. He too has a family of children, who look up to him both for support and instruction—for precept and example. His wife, after years of ridicule and reproaches—after hearing till her ears were dull, the reiteration of objections to her Christian profession, and oaths and imprecations against her puritanism, has become confused, and in despair has renounced all pretensions to religion. She has finally imbibed the temper and the genius of infidelity. And in doing so, has sunk into sullen dislike of all those topics which once occupied her thoughts—or with flippant and disgusting effrontery bandies the subject of religion as the butt of scandal and the object of her sovereign contempt. She too has resolved all virtue into expediency, and can maintain without a blush, with some of the most distinguished and literary champions of infidelity, that even adultery were no crime, if it were more common!*

And what influences may not be expected from such principles, and such admissions—not to say examples? When the fountain is vitiated or impure, the streams are so by natural consequence. The children of such parents, have no proper

*See Horne's Intr., Phila. Edition, 1836, Vol. i, pp. 25, 26.

ideas of religion—they have no just conception of the nature and necessity of moral virtue, and they have none of the feelings of veneration and respect for a superior Being. The most daring blasphemy is uttered by them without shame and without remorse; and they grow up to spread in turn the influence of the moral contagion with which they are infected. No mother's soft and whispered prayer to God, steals in holy power upon their recollection when weighed down with years, or in a strange land, or bowed and crushed by the hand of affliction. They have no God but self—no pursuit but personal and physical gratification—no hope, no futurity, but the grave.

Happily, infidelity has not generally led its votaries thus far, in the road to moral ruin. But such are its legitimate tendencies. And it is believed that infidels themselves must perceive them, if they will but allow their minds to consider the steps which lead on to these results. But whether they will do this or not, their responsibilities are the same—to themselves, to the public, and to all within the sphere of their influence.

PART II.

EVIDENCES OF REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

CHARACTER OF THE DEITY.

The reader has been kept much longer than was at first intended, from the consideration of the *internal evidences of a Divine revelation*. But it seemed proper and necessary to remove certain impediments to a clear understanding of the subject in debate, before we entered upon this part of our labors. Christianity, however simple and intelligible originally, has become by far too general and indefinite a term, to be treated without explanation. It is undoubtedly capable of defence as a whole—as a system of revelation. But among the immense variety of sects, whose opinions not only differ from each other, but are sometimes quite contradictory, objections might lie against certain views which we have no wish to defend, or which we deem wholly indefensible. Let their abettors see to this matter themselves. It is our desire to have it perfectly understood what we mean by Christianity. And with a view to render this as intelligible as possible, we have endeavored to clear it of the several incumbrances which Heathenism, or superstition, or policy has incorporated with its original doctrines.

By Christianity, then, we mean that system of divine truth which was revealed from heaven, according to the will of God; the doctrines and precepts of which, are worthy of their divine original—some of them being such as the world did not possess, and could not discover, and the moral precepts of which, are alone calculated to render mankind good and happy. It explodes the idea of a plurality of gods, and distinctly teaches the divine unity and paternity; it employs, not a divinity, but the "man Christ Jesus," to illustrate the principles and practices that constitute reconciliation; it supposes mankind in possession of some correct views and feelings, and instructs them how to improve and perfect them; it makes no distinction of nation or character, but addresses itself to all alike, and to all generations; and it promises what all desire, and what nothing else can prove, a resurrection of the dead, and a happy and glorious immortality for all mankind.

Such only, in our estimation, is Christianity—such is the system which we propose to maintain; the evidences of which are two-fold—those which relate to it as a whole, and such as confirm the propriety, consistency, and truth of its respective parts. And as it is taken for granted, that we are debating the general question with reasonable men, we will not intentionally introduce an argument that is not in itself reasonable. And, differ as we may in our respective conclusions, there are

principles of mind, and rules of judging, concerning which there is little room for disagreement.

As a whole—an entire system—Christianity is proved to be a divine communication, by the great superiority and excellency of the character which it ascribes to God, and by its adaptation to the political condition, social relations, and moral and mental wants of mankind. It will scarcely be denied, that the views entertained of the Deity, were, with the exception of the Hebrews, too gross and sensual to be denominated reasonable. For though an occasional conception worthy of the supreme Intelligence, may be detected in the mass, they were perpetually obscured and contradicted by other and more prevailing sentiments, which lessened and degraded every divinity whose being was acknowledged by mankind. And labor as men may, to prove that any just and rational notions of a perfect Deity were entertained in the Heathen world, before the introduction of Christianity, the attempt must end in disappointment.

1. The Jupiter of the Greeks and Romans, was to all intents the same, and possessed the same attributes as the principal or superior god of all the Heathen world. But he was not supreme in power, nor could he in all cases, be truly said to govern the universe. He was himself perpetually influenced and controlled by a blind and unconscious chance, or fate. It is true, that some of

the properties of omnipotence were ascribed to him, and he was pompously denominated "the father of gods and men"—but every one knows, or may know with little labor, that he was at the same time bound by an uncontrollable decree; so that he was in the predicament of an animal confined by a chain—free to go its length, and to do any thing he pleased within the circle it would describe, but nothing beyond.

2. The passions by which the superior god of paganism was actuated, were of the grossest and most brutal kind. These are well described by Pope, in a single line—"rage, revenge, and lust"—and are so palpably unsuitable to human dignity and morality, as to require no proof of their impropriety when attached to the character of the governor of the universe. Nor were these passions supposed to be either dormant, or under proper and becoming restraint. They were cherished by indulgence and unrestrained gratification; and violence and misrule, such as would disgrace the court of an oriental potentate, were the characteristics of the supernal abodes. The amours, and intrigues, and debaucheries—the deep and settled malice, unnatural envy, and vindictive contests—the chicanery, craft, and circumvention of the chief deity of Heathenism, can not be described in any terms, without an offence to common decency. Even some of the Heathens blushed for the infamy of their gods;

but they still thought they were gods, and worshipped and served them with rites in all respects suited to their character.

3. The principal Heathen deity, was neither infinitely wise nor omniscient. It is notorious that the inferior deities, male and female, were supposed occasionally to steal a march upon his vigilance, while he was napping, or indulging in an extra cup of nectar, or was busy with the affairs of state, or of his household. And during these intermissions of universal knowledge, much mischief was occasionally done in his cabinet, and some of its politic members found time to arrange their own little matters on earth, as well as circumvent the machinations of some rival in heaven. And then, however terrible the offended majesty, he was sometimes strangely perplexed to find the culprit, or to apply the proper antidote to all future presumption. For he could neither foresee the full extent of the operation of the evils in train, nor had he wisdom to guard against those which might yet be planned and executed by his dependents. And he resembled a testy and capricious householder, whose domestics, though standing in some fear, are nevertheless disposed to manage their own private affairs in their own way; and who trust to their mutual interest, as well as the oversight of their master, for concealment and impunity. Such management keeps him in a state of perpetual vexation and wrath,

and annoys and occupies him in fruitless endeavors to restore order and discipline to his household. Such was the deity of the religion of nature!

There were those who, disgusted with the mockery of religion, rejected the doctrine and belief of a God. But it seems never once to have occurred to them, that a Deity could exist, whose attributes were unexceptionable, or which did not comprise those already named. And while atheists abounded, and some of the philosophers exposed without mercy, the character of their divinities to contempt and ridicule, many of them were among the most arrant idolators. Is it not surpassing strange, that with an open field—the full privilege of conceiving of as many deities as they pleased, ages should successively roll away, and not one blameless divinity is found among the objects of human devotion? That from the father of gods and men, down to the tutelary genius of a single individual, there was not one who was supposed to possess positive omnipotence, infinite wisdom and knowledge, or even common goodness? And yet, in full view of all these facts, and a thousand others which may not here be named, we are told that the mere light of nature and plain common sense, are sufficient for all the purposes of religion. If this assertion were true, why were the characters of the Heathen gods so utterly abhorrent? If it is true, how can

we account for the stupid and preposterous devotion, which was rendered by men of the first capacities to divinities of wood and stone? If true, what reason can be rendered for the abominable sacrifices and impure rites which deformed the Pagan religion in every part of the world? If true, what apology can be made for the licensed enormities of mankind? But it is not true; nor, in view of what Heathenism was, and is, can any reasonable man think it true!

But there is one fact which is overlooked by skeptics: they apply the knowledge which they have derived from Christianity, and from Christianity alone, to their position, that the light of nature is sufficient to perfect both morals and religion. They forget that the precepts of the Christian doctrine, are effectually calculated to lead and improve the moral sense, at the same time that reason approves the principles and the progress of the mind. They forget that the high and worthy notions which they entertain of the Deity, and the correct moral views which they cherish, are the result of a Christian education. They are indebted to the strong religious feeling of a fond and pious mother, or a tender father, and to the practical lessons of a heavenly morality illustrated by them, and by others around, for all that they feel, and enjoy, or practice above the Heathens. Their youth was guided, directly or indirectly, by the great and pervading influence

of the Gospel; and however unseen, or unacknowledged, if seen, it has moulded their minds and feelings to a greater or lesser extent, by its own power. And they constitute a host, which has turned its arms against the institutions by which it has been cherished. If they want evidence of this, let them endeavor to ascertain why their views of the Deity, or of the nature, necessity, and propriety of moral virtue, are so very different from those of the philosophers whom they admire! These lived exclusively under the *light of nature*, and they were certainly men of acute and admirable common sense; but with the boasted infallibility of these guides, they were greatly behind the moderns in their religious views and moral sentiments: and from what we have already seen, there is yet room for considerable improvement in these respects, in the family of unbelievers. Reason, then, whether in the believer or unbeliever, will infallibly lead to the same conclusion, that the improved theology and morality of skeptics, are the result of the influence of the doctrines and precepts of revelation.

With the views of the Deity entertained by the Heathen, let us now compare those of the Hebrew and the Christian. And then, if we can, account in a satisfactory manner for the difference—a difference which will not only show the immense superiority of the God of the Bible,

but one which no unbeliever can dispute is approved by every principle of reason.

1. It was the belief of the Hebrews, and it is that of Christians, that God is absolutely and effectually omnipotent, and that as such, he "doeth his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." They believe that he neither is, nor can be influenced, thwarted, or controlled by any principle or being separate from or external to himself; but that all that is, or was, or can be, is subject to the direction and control of his all-disposing energy. They believe that he presides with endless and undeviating might, over all that Heathenism denominated chance, or fate, or decree; and that he disposes of, and controls all that lay beyond the utmost boundary of power ever assigned to any Heathen god. And there is something in this view, that satisfies the demands of reason. It explodes chance or accident from the physical and moral universe, and reduces every thing to the direction of supreme intelligence. There is reason to believe that absolute and illimitable power is concentrated in an all-disposing mind. And he who owns a God, can not presume to be reasonable in denying his omnipotence. Nor is there among skeptics, one whose mind would not revolt at the idea of ascribing to him any thing less. To a man, they will admit his proper and unqualified omnipotence, or deny his being. They do not—they dare not

conceive of God as did the Heathens of their Jupiter; and they can not do so, and claim the appellation of philosophers, or wise men.

2. The Christian's God is above and beyond the imputation of the foul and hateful passions which disfigure the fairest and the highest beings in the whole Pagan mythology. The student of nature no where sees a single page in all the works of God, polluted by the impurity of his passions. On the contrary, there are every where the traces of a benignity that knows no selfishness, and no limitation—of a purity that pours its freshness over every unsophisticated mind, and of a compassion that provides for all the natural wants of "every living thing." The moralist sees, in the prompt and impartial visitations of chastisement for offences, and in the ample peace of well-doing, the everlasting spirit of equity; and in the measures and means for effecting the reformation of the wicked, and of mitigating the sorrows of the afflicted, the condescension of boundless mercy. And in all these things, there are no signs of capriciousness, no fitful paroxysms of oppressive cruelty, no weak and childish compassion. An even temper and a steady hand adapts the discipline to the disobedient, or measures the sum of blessing to patient and persevering virtue.

The Bible gives the same character to the Deity. Its ascriptions never once fall below moral

perfection. Not an unworthy passion or affection attaches to him. He has no lusts to gratify, no intrigues to carry on, no competitors to excite his envy or provoke his indignation. But he is just, merciful, and true; affectionate, benevolent, and compassionate; and his compassions are enduring. These are the moral perfections of the omnipotent God—their field of operation is infinity, and their period is eternity. Such is the purity, the excellency of the Being who presides over the universe. And what is there in these perfections, that reason does not approve, and must not acknowledge to be suitable to the dignity, the government, and the majesty of God? What, that reason does not imperiously demand, as constituent virtues in an infinite moral Governor?

3. The God of the Bible is omniscient. All times, all beings, and all events, are ever in his view. From the greatest to the least of all concernments, through the infinity of their gradations, whether of matter, mind, or morals, they are alike comprehended, controlled, directed, and made in their respective spheres the instruments and appendages of his plan of universal government. The thoughts of all hearts are open to his inspection; he pervades the darkness as well as the light—life as well as a moment, and eternity as well as time. He never slumbers, is never weary, and is never so occupied that his omniscience turns from any one object in the field of

immensity. Heaven itself, has no means of attraction, that can for a moment withdraw his attention from earth—from the least, the vilest, the meanest thing that has a being on its surface. And that attention descends below the utmost care of the human mind—makes a miniature world in every department of matter—peoples it with myriads of invisibles, and provides for every want and every purpose of their existence.

And in close and holy communion with this all-pervading knowledge, lives the wisdom of God. With this attribute, the Deity manages the vast, the diversified concerns that throng in infinite number and endless succession before the steady and untiring view of the eternal Mind. His wisdom is never outwitted—its plans are never thwarted, and its determinations can neither be evaded, frustrated, nor postponed. For while the "end was seen from the beginning," all the intermediate steps in the process were amply provided for; and power, knowledge, and wisdom concentrate in one great and immaculate purpose, and bring their infinite resources to bear upon its final accomplishment.

We may now ask, if there is any thing in the character of the God of the Bible, that is inconsistent with reason and sound philosophy? Is it unreasonable to suppose, that the Being who created all things, is present to his works? If not, then the Scripture doctrine concerning his

omniscience, is reasonable. And the Psalmist spoke the language of philosophy and common sense, when he said—"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, [the grave,] behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me."

Again, is it unreasonable to suppose that he who knows all things, past, present, and to come, is infinitely wise? Is not knowledge the basis of wisdom, and consequently, is not he the wisest who knows the most? Infinite knowledge, then, is the criterion of infinite wisdom. And is it not also reasonable to ascribe both infinite knowledge and wisdom to the Deity? If it is, the sacred writers displayed their good sense, at least, in saying, that "known unto God are all his works, from the beginning;" and of wisdom—"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.—When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water."

Is it unreasonable that God should be infinitely perfect in all his moral attributes? The concentration of these, constitutes infinite goodness;

and infinite goodness consists in the personal *purity* of the being to whom it is ascribed, and in the impartial diffusion and exercise of the principles of justice, mercy, truth, and benignity. All this the Scriptures ascribe to God. "Thou art good and doest good;" "The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." To us it is plain, that the least want in any of these particular perfections, would render the character of God *imperfect*—that it would *undeify* the Deity, and that to ascribe such want to him, is to the last degree unreasonable and impious. It is reasonable to believe in God, and no less so, to ascribe to him the attributes and perfections that are worthy of his divinity. And as none but such are attributed to him in the Bible, the doctrines of that book are so far consistent and reasonable, as relate to the divine perfections. But such perfections were never ascribed to the gods of the Heathen; and consequently the mere light of nature furnished none but inconsistent, unworthy, and unreasonable notions of the Deity. The question involved in this subject, and which remains to be settled, is, whence did the Hebrews derive the only rational and consistent views of the natural and moral perfections of the Deity? There are but three sources whence they could have been obtained—and these are, from the surrounding nations, or they originated them, or else derived them by special revelation. As far as

miracles are concerned, there is little difference to which we refer their origin. For in either case, considerations are involved which defy the ordinary conclusions of the mind from existing facts, and which can not be accounted for without admitting the violation of the usual processes of human intellect, or a miraculous intervention. To suppose that they were derived from others, is to suppose an effect without an adequate or even an obvious cause; it is to make them impart what there is not a shadow of proof was possessed. For it is too evident to be seriously questioned, that no nation under heaven, of whom history or tradition has given us any information, entertained any corresponding ideas of the nature and character of the Deity. How, then, could the sacred writers borrow their notions of the divine perfections? Reason must say, that if they were obtained from others, they must have been derived from those who had them. But there were none such, and to suppose that they were so procured, is to the last degree unreasonable; it is not only to suppose an effect without a cause, but it is the denial of the necessary effects of existing causes.

Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, evidently came out of a family of idolators—such they certainly were, in the days of his grandson, Jacob; and both among the tribes who then peopled Canaan, and by whom the family of the patriarch was surrounded, and the Egyptians, whose ser-

vants his descendants afterwards became for several centuries, the grossest and most revolting polytheism certainly prevailed. Whence, then, could Abraham have borrowed his theology? Whence could his patriarchial sons have learned the doctrine of the divine unity? Whence could Moses, who to a certainty could acquire no such views from any existing system among the Egyptians, or from any other people not connected with the Hebrews, have derived the clear and consistent notions of God, which are so often expressed by him in the books of the law? From the peculiar and isolated nationality of the Hebrews, and their inveterate and cherished prejudices, it is morally certain that they *would not* have borrowed their religion if they could; and from the fact that no such views existed among others, it is certain that they *could not* have thus derived them, if they would.

That Moses, who wrote the pentateuch, ascribes these high notions of the Deity to the patriarchs, is undeniable; and that they were maintained exclusively by their descendants till the commencement of the Christian era, is proved by the whole and united testimony of sacred and profane history. Abraham, or Moses—for it is immaterial which, as far as the argument is concerned—must have originated them by the mere force of a superior intellect, or they must have been derived by direct revelation. In either case, the knowledge

is miraculous. But we are greatly mistaken, if skeptics are prepared, or disposed to admit that the solitary Mesopotamian was wiser than all the world besides; or that the Hebrew Lawgiver could from the nature of the case, be a sounder philosopher than any other country has produced. If they will admit either, they should by all means believe the Bible, in order to sustain their pretensions to reason and philosophy!

Who that for a moment considers the simplicity of the character of the patriarchs, the comparative rudeness and barbarism of their descendants when contrasted with the superiority of other nations in general knowledge, in social refinement, and civil policy—who that does this, can imagine that mere unassisted intellect ever attained to those sublime and worthy conceptions of the Deity, for which they were distinguished? Is it probable that Abraham alone of all mankind, should be able to form a correct idea of God, and should become, in this respect, the instructor of the human race, without divine aid? That among the millions whose feelings must lead them to the contemplation of congenial subjects, and to form notions of the attributes of God—that of the thousands and tens of thousands of acute and speculative philosophers, the patriarch alone should *reason* himself into the knowledge of the true God? If it be not absolutely impossible, it is at least extremely improbable, and can scarcely be

contended for by any well-informed skeptic, merely to support a favorite hypothesis.

But we have no right to suppose that any one man is exclusively capable of forming, by the mere superiority of his intellect, the only worthy notions of the Deity. There is no parallel by which such a supposition can be sustained. And yet, if the Bible doctrine of the Deity be not a revelation, this must be admitted. For it is certain, that no views worthy of God, were ever discovered by those who do not acknowledge that Book, or have not been educated under its teachings. Besides, were such a supposition admitted, it would by no means answer the purpose of the skeptic, because it would still force him to admit a miracle into his theory. And we put the question to the good sense of the skeptic, or any other man, which is the most out of the order of nature—the most miraculous—that only one man should possess the powers of mind requisite to discover the true principles of theology, or that those principles were revealed from heaven? If miracles are most miraculous, because few in number, then, if natural talents only operated in the discovery of the divine perfections, such an intellect is, of all other things, the most wonderful, since it stands alone, and must forever stand unequalled, the admiration of a world.

The conclusion, then, is, that the only reasonable and philosophical account of the origin of

the Bible doctrine respecting the attributes and perfections of the Deity, is, that it was revealed. And that these views are a revelation from God, is proved by their nature, their consistency, and their tendency. They could not have been borrowed by the sacred writers, for there is no evidence that any people, or persons on earth possessed them. They could not have been originated by the Hebrew patriarchs, for they were not distinguished in other respects from those with whom they were associated; and they neither possessed extraordinary talents, or superior means of arriving at truth. And that such high and worthy notions did exist, with such a people as the Hebrews, and at such a time of the world—that they are what they are, and that they have superseded other systems, is proof of their divine original.

CHAPTER II.

INSPIRED WRITERS.

It is obvious, that what has been said of the divine character and perfections, as exhibited in the Old Testament, applies equally to the Christian dispensation—the New Testament being, in this respect, a prolongation of that economy commenced in the earliest times of the Hebrews.—Here, the perfections of God are more illustriously displayed, more immediately rendered the subjects of regard, and brought to bear more directly upon our necessities and our hopes. And here, what was promised, is fulfilled; what was liable to misapprehension from the mistakes and infirmities of human judgment, is illustrated; what was reserved under a partial and national dispensation, is published to the whole world, and established upon miracles and the most unequivocal testimony.

There is one fact of a most striking and peculiar character, which attaches to the personal pretensions of the writers of the Bible, and which distinguishes them in a remarkable manner, from all others whom the world calls moralists or philoso-

phers. It is not their undeviating candor in recording both their virtues and vices—their knowledge and ignorance—their just apprehensions, and their follies and mistakes. These things have excited the admiration of all who have attentively read the Scripture history; and while they stand without a parallel, they can not fail to impress the mind in favor of their integrity. Their frankness in these particulars, is eminently calculated to secure our respect for their personal characters, and our confidence in the facts which they relate. It goes far to prove that they were both honest men, and had no disposition to deceive or impose upon others.

And these considerations, when sustained by the further fact, that the writers of both the Old and New Testaments, were singularly free from every thing bearing the common marks of enthusiasm or fanaticism, afford very powerful reasons for thinking that what they relate is true. Giving, therefore, to all these particulars their full weight and importance, still we think, there are other considerations which attach exclusively to their characters, that not only sustain every legitimate inference from the preceding, but constitute a distinct and decisive testimony of their own inspiration, and the truth and authenticity of their writings.—*It is the fact, that they never assumed to be the original and unaided authors of the the sentiments which they delivered.*

The philosophers and casuists of all other times and nations, were too sensitive in relation to their

own interest and reputation, not to maintain them at every hazard, when possible. It certainly never occurred to them, to ascribe any thing either to the gods or to men, to which they themselves could make any plausible pretensions. They never hesitated to represent themselves as the sole and unaided authors of the systems which they taught. In a thousand ways they treat religion as a jest, and the very being of their gods, as a trick of state policy, or the conjecture of superstition. And it is certain, that however exalted some of their views of morality might be, they were culpably indifferent to its practice. Thus, for instance—while they knew that the most degrading excesses and beastly indulgences were practiced in the very rites of their religion, they not only allowed, but encouraged their observance, both by advice to their pupils and friends, and by the weight of their own example. And such base hypocrisy is among the things urged upon the world, as evidence of the all-sufficiency of nature and philosophy!

All this, is the very opposite of the course pursued by the writers of the Bible. They lay their honors at the feet of Supreme intelligence and wisdom; and ascribe their views, their institutions, and all the distinctions and privileges derived from them, to the one and only God whom they adored. They make no pompous parade of new theories and systems—no sneers at the religious institutions under which they lived—no sarcastic insinuations

that the Deity was a mere creature of the imagination, or that religion was a matter only of state policy. Far, very far from all this, and from every thing bearing any affinity or resemblance to such a course. Without being ascetic, they were devout; without the semblance of fanaticism, they were religious; without skepticism, they believed in, and free from hypocrisy, they worshipped the living and true God.

Now there is not so great a difference in the constitutional propensities of men, as these facts unquestionably imply—if both are supposed to be influenced by any regard to their individual reputation as moralists or philosophers. There is no reason to question, that the heart of an Israelite, of the Patriarch himself, was not as susceptible of the feelings of pride, or ambition, or praise, as those of Plato, Seneca, or Cicero. And yet, the latter claim, and their admirers make the same claim for them down to this time, all the personal reputation which the nature of the case, and the respective systems will allow. On the contrary, the sacred writers neither demand—nor yet have those who most prize the truths they taught, ever given them—credit for superior mental endowments. Although it can scarcely have escaped the observation of the most careless and indifferent, that if we are to judge of the talents of men by their writings, and were to consider the Bible merely as a human production

the sacred writers will and must stand pre-eminent among mankind.

The philosopher stands forward on the canvass in an attitude to attract every eye to himself; the Patriarch, the Lawgiver, the Prophet, and the Apostle, are always thrown into the shade, and occupy the back-ground. The latter always present some superior personage, or refer you to some all-engrossing topic, as alone worthy your regard; while the writer assumes no more than to be the instrument of soliciting your attention to them alone. He constantly affirms, that he is not the author of the truths, or even the sentiments which he utters; but uniformly ascribes them to a higher power. In one word, it is enough for the sacred penman, that the truth is brought to light—the means of moral knowledge and virtue placed in the hands of mankind, and the Deity alone rendered the object of all the gratitude and praise of their manifestation.

How is all this to be accounted for? Why are not the sacred writers to be brought forward as the wise ones of the earth, as well as the men of Greece, or Rome, or Persia, or Egypt? There can be no reason why it may not be done, aside from that assigned by themselves—that they were the mere instruments of publishing the will and the purpose of God. Their modesty in not assuming the part of absolute authorship of the matter of their writings, is also accounted for on this supposition, and no other; for however amiable and commendable on

any other account, it never cast a shadow across the splendor of a single philosophical system since the foundation of the world. But there is something more than mere modesty in the inspired writers, in relation to this matter. They not only affirm that they were not the authors of the doctrines and precepts which they published, but many of them endured nearly every form and variety of suffering in the maintenance of that fact! To such trials and sufferings no man can subject himself, unless conscious that what he affirms, is the truth. If any skeptic is disposed to question this, let him endeavor to ascertain how much and how long a Heathen philosopher would be likely to suffer, rather than own himself the author of his particular system.

It will be in vain to urge, that they were the dupes of a misguided—or rather, *misguiding* fanaticism, and that, like some half-crazed enthusiasts, they were under the influence of an imposing hallucination. The sobriety of their writings, the soundness of their theology, the dignity and self-possession which they maintained, both in their intercourse with friends and enemies, and, finally, the unexceptionable morality which they taught and exemplified, are all foreign to, and incompatible with the character of fanatics. No class of men were ever further from the extravagances of fanaticism, than were those who were the instruments of composing the books of Scripture. They were strongly impressed with the truth and importance

of the subject matter of their respective communications, and appear like men in earnest—but they never descended to extremes not fully warranted by the established customs of their times, and of that part of the world in which they lived. Besides, they have left in their writings, the most unequivocal evidence of their disapprobation of every thing bearing the aspect of phrenzied enthusiasm. And we feel safe in challenging a comparison of their writings as a whole, with any others which the world can boast of, whether the production of enthusiasm, or of cold philosophy, or of modern skepticism, for sound principles, decent expression, or moral purity. In these particulars, they are so immeasurably above any and every other known writings, as to exempt their reputed authors from the slightest imputation of extravagance. And he must be strangely infatuated, or disposed to cavil, who does not, on a slight comparison of the Bible with the offspring of any fanatic's brain, discover at once, that it was produced both by benevolence and a "sound mind." The purity of the moral precepts alone, inculcated by the sacred writers, bears the most unexceptionable testimony to the soundness of their understanding, as it is notorious that fanatics and enthusiasts are miserably deficient in correct principles, and just views of morality. The writers of the Bible are not, therefore, the men to impose on themselves, or to endeavor to impose on others, the belief of their inspiration, without its foundation in fact.

From the foregoing facts and considerations, the following inferences seem naturally and necessarily to follow. We say naturally, because it appears impossible for a reasonable man to fail of drawing them—and necessarily, because they are the only ones that can be drawn, without violence to experience, observation, and sound philosophy.

1. If the sacred writers had not been inspired, there is no obvious reason why they should not have claimed as their own productions, the books of Scripture bearing their respective names. From all that appears of their history, they were not impelled by any sinister motives, to ascribe their communications to the influence of divine inspiration. And it seems next to impossible, to suppose that they could be actuated by such motives. The circumstances under which most of them wrote, plainly and absolutely forbid that supposition. This is alike true and palpable of the writers, both of the Old and New Testaments. For it may be asked, what did they propose to themselves? After what did they aspire, that could not be as well, as easily and as certainly attained without, as with such pretensions? Let any period after the introduction of the Law, be selected, [that will be attended to in its place,] and then let the question be pressed, what could any one of the sacred writers hope to effect, which rendered the pretension to inspiration necessary? Men never act for any length of time, and in a way calculated to bring about im-

portant results, without some definite motive. And what could be the motive, which induced the sacred writers to claim inspiration?

By far the greater number of prophets, lived and wrote after the separation of the ten tribes from the kingdom of Judah. Let us, then, take examples from the most illustrious of these instructors of the people; and endeavor to ascertain the *motives* by which they might possibly be impelled to ascribe their doings, or their writings, to the influence of a divine interposition. And for this purpose, we begin with Elijah, one of the most distinguished, and one of the first in this catalogue of worthies. Was it—could it be for his personal interest or aggrandizement, that he withstood kings, and rebuked tyrants and their minions, both civil and ecclesiastical? Did his acknowledged character of prophet, protect him, in any instance, from public odium, and personal sufferings, and the continued hatred and and cruelty of the rulers, where the reputation of merely being a wise man—or, if you please, a philosopher—would not have answered the same purpose? We venture to say, that no man with any pretensions to candor, can read the books of Kings and Chronicles, with the least reference to this subject, and can believe for a moment, that the assumption of being a prophet of God, screened him in a single instance from any reproach or suffering from which Nestor, Plato, or even Franklin would not have been secure, had they lived at the same

time and in the same place. Nay—there is abundant reason to believe, that his prophetic character was more than once made the pretext for severities, which the mere philosopher would never have been called to endure. And with the public reputation of either of the persons, real or supposed, above named, there is not an act ascribed to him, except those which are avowedly miraculous, which they might not have performed with equal impunity. Will the skeptic try to discover some sufficient motive which could induce this extraordinary man to assume a character, which so far from honoring or profiting him, subjected him to a life of privation and oppression, without supposing him actually inspired!

The same remarks in substance, apply to all the rest. Isaiah, from the high place which he is supposed to have held among his people, needed no other sanctions to give weight, and influence, and acceptance to his communications. His position in society appears to have been such, as to place him in the same station, and make him alike the counsellor of kings, whether considered as prince or prophet. Let the skeptic have his way for a moment—let this individual be considered only as one of the princes of Judah, and what then? Why, if he will read that part of the Bible ascribed to this same Isaiah, the son of Amos, he will be astonished to find, that for splendor of imagery, simplicity, and beauty, and sublimity of conception and style,

there is nothing in all the Heathen world among poets, casuists, or philosophers, that can compare with that book. And it will no doubt puzzle him not a little, to imagine how a mere semi-barbarous Jew, (as he would courteously call him,) could conceive so nobly, and write so elegantly. He must have been wiser than the wisest, and greater than the greatest of Heathens—or he was inspired. And in either case, the skeptic should do him honor above others, to be consistent with himself. If only as a poet and moralist, he is entitled to more veneration than Plato. But as inspired, he is to be regarded as the messenger and prophet of God. And this is manifestly his true character.

Apply, now, the question in the case of the prophet Jeremiah—what end could he possibly have in view, in assuming the prophetic character, that could not have been quite as well attained without it? He was certainly not in favor with the court—nor did he coincide with its general views. And for aught that appears to the contrary, he did not aspire to any worldly distinction. On the contrary, there is every appearance that he sympathised deeply and cordially in the impending misfortunes and sufferings of his countrymen, and only warned them of the certainty of mischief and calamity, as the issue of the course they were pursuing. These admonitions, it will not be doubted, could have been given without the claim to a divine mission. And had they been so given by a Heathen, and the

result had been the same, how carefully would his name have been transmitted to us, and what honors would have been paid to his marvellous discernment. But here, a modest prophet, disclaiming all ability to speak for himself, delivers the most palpable truth, verified by events then in progress, and he is regarded as a simple fanatic, a madman, a bungling impostor! Such, however, is the character and spirit of infidelity, that it is utterly blind to all excellence, unless hung to the skirts of a skeptic or a—Heathen.

But it does not appear that either the king or his counsellors considered this prophet as a fanatic or a madman. For when they saw his predictions fulfilling on themselves, they did not hesitate to seek his advice, and at once changed their course of conduct from severity to kindness. And we may very safely leave this fact for the consideration of unbelievers, subjoining the question—whether they are as likely to know that he was a pretender, as those who tested the correctness of his predictions, and honored him as a prophet? We would also suggest the propriety of their giving some attention to the persecutions and punishments which this good prophet endured, and which, it seems they think, he was foolish enough to bring on himself, merely because he pretended to inspiration. And if he were not inspired, will they assign a respectable and obvious reason why he endured them?

It is not easy to conjecture an important and satisfactory reason, why the prophet Daniel should have declared himself to be inspired, unless he really was so. The relation in which he stood to the Hebrews, and the station that he held in the court of the Babylonian monarch, leave no visible object to be attained by such pretension. His authority with the king, and his obvious right to command the obedience of his own people, were such as to secure any end that appears to have been contemplated. Certainly, it had no effect with the Chaldeans, who evidently considered him merely a wise man, until a train of remarkable events forced from his master the acknowledgment, that none but Jehovah, the God of Daniel, could enable man to do such marvellous things. And yet, it must be plain, that in this case, the prophet sacrificed much of that personal reputation that would otherwise attach to himself, by giving all the praise to God. How much greater than the wise ones of Babylon, must he appear, if not inspired; and how much of that greatness is voluntarily sacrificed by becoming a prophet! If personal honor and fame had been the object, he could not have adopted or permitted the prophetic character—and that he did so, is at least very good evidence of his actual inspiration.

Ezekiel and others of nearly the same period, had no perceptible end in view in their communications, except that of encouraging their captive country-

men with the hope of returning to the land of their fathers. This is their theme, though other and important subjects are occasionally introduced, the development and fulfilment of which, have abundantly verified their pretensions. But all that principally concerned their personal reputation, related to events connected with their own times. And we put the question seriously to the unbeliever, whether there is any visible object involved by the reputation of a prophet, that would not have been equally well attained by the more common process under similar circumstances? Every one knows that nations as well as individuals, may be excited by merely human efforts—by appeals to their patriotism, their interests, and their personal feelings. And there is no apparent reason why this might not have been as successfully done in this instance, as by the intervention of the prophetic character.—Why, then, should it have been assumed? And the only rational answer is, because that character was the true one.

Of the writers of the New Testament, little need be said under this head. It is not contended that they could have effected what they did, in some respects, without the aid of inspiration. Of the amount of that inspiration, we have spoken elsewhere. But supposing all that the skeptic contends for—viz., that they were not inspired—what possible end could they have in view, or did they attain, by the pretence? If the world was but half

as skeptical as it now is, they must have known that the pretence to inspiration was decidedly offensive, and calculated to operate to their disadvantage. And if not inspired, its avowal must have been an act of unparalleled imbecility. Will the skeptic, then, find some plausible reason, even on his own views, why they should have openly asserted, and suffered what they did for asserting, that they were divinely inspired?

Men who have special and sinister motives in view—who have none but personal ends and aims to gratify—never throw themselves in the face of power, public favor, and religious prejudice, without calculating the chances of being able, after a few sharp conflicts, to triumph. On the contrary, the wily hypocrite usually takes special care to float on the surface of the current of popular opinion, that he may wind his serpent-coils around the unsuspecting multitude. He is reckless of the opinion which after ages may form of his deserts—for it is not futurity in which he is interested, but the present time. To be the present master, dictator, and leader of his species—to exert a present power over the fortunes, the minds, the actions of men, is his aim. But he has neither the heart to endure, nor the moral courage to tempt a scene of trials and sufferings, such as were borne by the apostles and primitive Christians.

Can these, then, be charged with such motives? Did they court popular favor, or cringe before the

frown of power? Did they spare exertion, because privations and death stared them in the face? Did they, with the example of their master fresh upon their minds, seek to attain personal honor, and eminence, and ease, by throwing the gauntlet of defiance in the teeth of authority, and public sentiment, and pride? Daring as skepticism often is, with these considerations in view, it is difficult to suppose that it dare assert what is so manifestly repugnant to all probability. Besides, the apostles were not the men to estimate the chances of a reputation some five hundred years after death.—Nor did they, in any instance, betray any solicitude about the opinions of any age, except their own; and they acted upon their views of duty, irrespective of final consequences.

All that has been urged, therefore, respecting the modesty of the Old Testament writers in rejecting the considerations of self, and ascribing all the merits and importance of their communications to a higher power, attaches with accumulated force to the apostles and evangelists. Had personal honor and reputation been their motive, they would never have pretended to inspiration; since all that they ascribe to superhuman aid, is so much withdrawn from themselves. And it is matter of wonder, that the very sagacious enemies of revelation, should never have perceived that they were paying a tribute of respect to these disciples of Christ, that places them immeasurably above their admired

philosophers—and giving them credit for talents that no Christian ever thought they had a right to claim. This is probably one of the instances of remarkable consistency, for which unbelievers claim to be specially distinguished—and it is doubtless a common and faithful specimen. In view of all these considerations and facts, we repeat that the natural and necessary inference is, that the writers of the Bible were divinely inspired.

2. Another obvious and necessary inference is, that human nature being always the same, the same general principles must always be in operation. Hence, if the sacred writers had not been inspired, some one, or more of them, would have claimed the honor of being the unaided author of the doctrines and precepts which he taught—or would have exposed the pretensions of others. But none of them ever did this. No instance occurs, in which the pretensions to inspiration of any individual whose name and writings constitute a part of the Bible, was ever accused by any other writer of the Scriptures, of being an impostor.—And this fact is of great importance, when we recollect that there were many of them, and that they, in several instances, lived and wrote in the same age. This fact is unparalleled in the history of man. And it proves that the individuals not only thought themselves inspired, but that they also thought the same of each other. There is abundant evidence, too, in the fact that they exposed

without reserve, their own imperfections, that they would have rebuked with unsparing severity, a crime so offensive to truth in others.

To this, it will no doubt be objected, that they might be mutually influenced by the same hallucination, and fanatically infer the inspiration of others, merely because they were themselves the subjects of self-delusion. Not so. Fanatics and enthusiasts are the last people in the world, to practice even common charity—much less are they disposed to indulge the pretensions of others! And this is daily illustrated, not only by the practices of conflicting sects, but by members of the same creed and profession. We need not even go so far back as the history of the Dominicans and Franciscans, who mutually exposed the chicanery and pious frauds of each other; the evidence is around and among us in the present day and generation. Besides, in the lapse of so many ages, it is not to be imagined that every writer among a whole people, was an enthusiast. The compositions betray a great variety; but this extraordinary character of fanaticism, by no means pervades them. The further conclusion then is, that they had good reason to believe themselves divinely inspired, and that they delivered the unsophisticated oracles of God.

CHAPTER III.

MOSAIC INSTITUTIONS.

Unbelievers have frequently amused themselves, and indulged in much sarcasm, in drawing a parallel between Moses and Mahommed—and by supposing that there was the same, or at least as good reason to believe that the religion of Islam was from heaven, as that of the Hebrews. And that if we admit the divine authority of the latter, we must that of the former; that if we regard the one a fanatic or impostor, we are bound so to consider the other. They represent both as designing pretenders to inspiration. Moses, we are told, like Mahommed, so managed as to attain and exercise unlimited power over his nation, under the pretext of divine direction—a "thus saith the Lord"—while he oppressed the people with an unmeaning, expensive, and burdensome ritual.

To all this we answer, that plausible as some parts of the objection are, it is entirely destitute of force, because there is, in fact, no parallel in the cases. Of this, any person can satisfy himself in a short time, who will take the pains to read the Koran, and compare it with the Bible. And he may

make the comparison with particular parts, or the whole. But he must assure himself, that the more diligently he examines, the further he pursues the comparison, the more fully and certainly will he become convinced that there is no parallel in the cases, and no weight or force in the objection. He will perceive that the conduct of Moses, throughout, was open, frank, and manly; and that there is in that of Mahommed, a secrecy, a continued series of assumptions, a caution in the delivery of his oracles as the time and occasion seemed to warrant, and that he purposely mystified them so as to render them of uncertain import—all of which is wholly unlike the proceedings of the Hebrew Legislator. Of the miracles of Mahommed, there was no human witness; while those of Moses, like those of Jesus, were wrought in open day, before multitudes, and in the presence both of friends and enemies.

Now, with the exception of the difficulty of understanding, in all cases, that peculiar oriental style and imagery, there is no evidence of obscurity in the Pentateuch. We may safely challenge an instance of apparently studied obscurity of expression, in all the writings ascribed to Moses. But it is believed, that no person acquainted with the subject, can be found, who would hazard a similar remark respecting the Koran. The Pentateuch is free from ambiguity and mysticism, while every part of the Koran is replenished with instances of

a redundant, verbose unmeaningness. This very mysticism and obscurity, seems to be the first object with fanatics and impostors, as they affect it in every instance, with undeviating certainty. In proof of this, the objector may compare, at his leisure, the Bible with the works of the whole catalogue of enthusiasts and impostors, from Gregory Thaumaturgus, or Nicholas Loyola, down to Emanuel Swedenborg, or even the book of Mormon. The Koran is of the same cast, and bears upon its front the impress of the same self-delusion, or deceptive purpose—characters which all the ingenuity of skeptics, never has, and never will be able to fasten upon the sacred writers.

While we would not impeach the candor of unbelievers, it is due to truth and justice to say, that the alleged parallel between Moses and Mahommed, betrays an unreasonable prejudice, or an unwarrantable ignorance of the Pentateuch, as well as of the Koran. What did Moses gain to himself, or to his family, by assuming to be divinely inspired, which could not, and would not have been as certainly obtained without that assumption? He made no provisions for his own family whatever—and the distinction assigned to his tribe, was notoriously to their disadvantage, as it excluded them from all participation in the division of the country, except a few small villages, and from many other common privileges of citizens. It is madness to suppose that the family of the Levites were as well

off in worldly matters, as their brethren of the other tribes. Men of general candor deceive themselves in this particular, in a most surprising manner.—They have in their view, the ample tythes of the English national establishment; and they infer that the provision for the sacred family among the Hebrews, was equally abundant. But nothing can be further from the truth. For it is notorious, that the Levites constituted about one-twelfth of the whole population. This is certainly a proportion which no one will pretend, is borne by the English clergy to the inhabitants of Great Britain. And if it were, we have every reason to believe that it would so diminish the revenues even of the Bishop of Durham, as to render him "poor indeed."

In times of public distress, the misfortune must bear particularly hard upon the Levites. And in times of apostacy from the established religion, they must have been without any resource. When war or famine spread its sable and desolating wing over the land, the Levite was sure to feel its first, and its heaviest influence. The regular order of things being interrupted—the attendance upon the stated worship, and the offerings at the national altar being suspended, the fountains of his scanty pittance would be dried up, and he left to feel the utter helplessness of his situation, and the full weight of his wretchedness. This is no fancied representation of his situation. The reader of the historic portions of the Old Testament, will remember that more

than once, this part of the nation was driven to seek the means of subsistence by any menial service among their more favored brethren. And with these facts—undeniable facts—before them, how is it that skeptics are so very sensitive to what they call the partiality of Moses for his tribe? It is at best, a partiality for which few Levites could thank him—and one which decidedly bettered the condition of all the rest of the nation. It is a partiality, which if applied this day in the same proportion to the unbelievers in the United States, would reduce them to a state of beggary; and probably bring them to the exercise of more just views and apprehensions of the subject, than they have yet entertained. Thus much, for this notable partiality of the Hebrew Lawgiver for promoting the worldly interests of his tribe!

Skepticism has arrayed and included the miracles wrought by Moses, in the same rank with those ascribed to Mahommed. But it has been merely assumed and asserted—for it has not been proved, nor does it admit of the shadow of proof. The miracles ascribed to Moses, were wrought before his countrymen, for the purpose of convincing them of his mission—before Pharaoh and his court, for the purpose of inducing him to permit the Hebrews to leave the country in peace—and during their journeyings, for administering to their wants, or for the overthrow of their enemies. These miracles always have spoken, and will ever continue to speak

for themselves. And in every instance, there was no room, and no occasion for fraud or collusion.—Had they not been real, there is no good reason to doubt, that except in a very few instances, the same ends could have been attained by other means. Indeed, had they not been all that they professed to be, the restless multitude, impatient of delay and of control, would have effectually exposed and exploded any and every attempt at imposition. For the history is fraught with abundant proof, that even while they admitted and admired the miracles, they were little disposed to act beyond, or otherwise than their feelings or apparent interests prompted.

Now can any man say in all good conscience, that there are equal proofs of the miracles ascribed to Mahommed—that, in fact, there is any proof whatever of their reality? Who was witness of his wonderful night excursion through some ninety heavens? Who saw the Koran delivered piecemeal by the angel Gabriel, to the prophet of the faithful? Nay—who can compare its fulsome and unmeaning pages, with the Pentateuch, and feel that he is drawing a legitimate parallel, between works of equal merit, and equal claims to divine authority? Any but a Mussulman, who can do this, is beyond the reach of argument, or the influence of testimony, and may feel safe against conviction of any truth, because it is reasonable. Such an one may well be a sceptic, for he is not fit to be any thing else.

It is also a very great mistake, to suppose that the ritual imposed on the Hebrews, was either unmeaning or oppressive.* And the imputation of either, betrays a culpable inattention to the nature and objects of the Mosaic institutions. It is very true, that the Lawgiver at Sinai, required a considerable number and variety of sacrifices. But it confined its requirements to such animals—and to such exclusively—as could be used for food.—Whereas, several of the Heathen offerings were of the most offensive kind—and frequently included the immolation of human beings. In all the rites of the Law, the sense of decency, cleanliness and moral purity, is always impressed, and appears to have been uniformly understood and appreciated. Among the Gentiles, on the contrary, their religious rites, and especially their festivals, were the scenes of indecency, filth, and the most unseemly and degrading debauchery. Under the Law, the presence of God, his fatherly care and benignity, were celebrated with becoming solemnity, and by every indication of sincere gratitude. The Heathen rites were ostensibly designed to propitiate some imaginary monster of cruelty and blood; and were observed for the more obvious purpose of indulging in the most brutal manner, some of the worst and lowest of the animal propensities.

* Priestley on the originality of the Mosaic Institutions, at the end of Notes on the Pentateuch.

Instead of a particularly burdensome, or even an expensive ritual, the institutions of Moses are, in these respects, by no means to be compared with those of the Heathens. He gave to the Hebrews but *three* public festivals in the year—the Heathens, on the contrary, had more than *ten times* that number. He gave directions for a votive offering, at best not very expensive, and then graduated to the humblest means of the poor—while the Heathens, the great exemplars of the religion of nature, considered the presentation of the most valued and costly things, as the exclusive pledge of uncommon piety. And yet, can any thing be conceived more inappropriate and grotesque, than the rich offerings of robes and tunics for the services and bedizenment of a wooden god! There is none of this unseemliness in the requisitions of the Law of Moses; every service is suited to the relative situation of the creature to the Creator—is well adapted to foster a spirit of devotion—is not pretended to be necessary to the Deity, but is the pledge of obedience to his requirements.

We may now be permitted to ask, where are the special indications in the administration of Moses, of his oppressions and exactions, or of a disposition to make the most of his high authority? Whether we consider his disregard of the interests of his family, the integrity and rectitude of his personal conduct, or the nature and utility of the institutions which he established, the world has never furnish-

ed his equal. If it were admitted that he was not inspired, he must certainly be considered the wisest, greatest, best of statesmen and rulers. This, skepticism itself would cheerfully admit, were it not for the claim to inspiration, on which all his authority and actions are founded. If he were not inspired, how is it to be accounted for, that he was some three thousand years in advance of his age, and brought his people, in moral science and views of the Deity, to a station of pre-eminence which all the efforts of philosophy never conceived nor attained? And we press the question, whether what is absolutely and undeniably good, is or can be the worse for having been derived from superhuman aid? Is the unbeliever prepared to reject as useless or corrupt, those benevolent institutions, which do honor to human nature, merely because they are professedly of divine origin? Would he wish us to believe, that he considers the high morality inculcated in the Decalogue—and which he knows is only taught there, except in the Christian system—as less pure, proper, and necessary, because avowedly dictated by the inspiration of God? Will he do, what has never yet been done—assign a respectable reason, why Moses was capable of doing what he did, and of establishing the institutions for which his nation was distinguished, if he were not inspired?

Again—does it follow, because certain leaders and conquerors have attained their pre-eminence by

fraud and violence, and ruled with a rod of iron, that therefore no man can rise to authority, and govern and direct the affairs of a nation, without being oppressive and tyrannical? If so, we may expect, in the next age at least, that unbelievers will charge, in this country, upon Washington, the character of usurper, rebel, and tyrant—that his forbearance was cowardice, his modesty but hypocrisy, and his retirement but imposture! And suppose, further, that the armies and people of the United States, had testified universally, that they had seen him work miracles, and had witnessed the descent of the visible symbols of the Deity in attestation and confirmation of his right to lead, and his authority to govern—on this principle, his pretensions must be founded in venality, his institutions be cumbersome, or costly, or nonsensical, and his people dupes and slaves.

Now, we have the united testimony of a whole people, that Moses was divinely appointed to lead them out of Egypt—that they saw, and were benefited by his miracles—that they witnessed the palpable indications of the divine presence in vindication of his authority, and in approbation of his institutions. And this testimony is further sustained by the maintenance of certain opinions, and the performance of certain rites or ceremonies, by that people, through a succession of ages. It goes still further, and proves that all this power was attained and exercised without an appeal to the sword, and

that these remarkable institutions were adopted and obeyed—not because any compulsory measures were employed in the first instance, but because their recipients were convinced that they were sent from Heaven. What right, then, has any man to assert, that the Hebrew Legislator was either usurper, tyrant, or impostor, that could not be assumed, as far as mere authority and power are concerned, of King Alfred, or of Washington? But every one knows that it can not be done of the latter, with decency, and much less with the show of reason. Nor can it be done, for the same, and yet higher considerations, of the Lawgiver of Israel.

Having now followed the skeptic through his supposed parallel of the pretensions and institutions of Moses and Mahommed, and having shown that he is mistaken in his inferences, and that no parallel exists, we must be permitted to ask him, in turn, to accompany us in the consideration of certain points and bearings of the Law, which appear to have wholly escaped his observation. It is not a little singular, that certain persons never discover what is good and praiseworthy in the lives or precepts of the sacred writers—while, at the same time, they can find much to admire in the stubborn insensibility of Zeno, and more in the filthy semi-beast, Diogenes, in his tub. They fasten upon some imperfection or indiscretion in the conduct of a patriarch, or prophet, and set it down as a plain and incontrovertible truth, that both the persons im-

plicated, and all others enrolled as Scripture writers, were weak and contemptible enthusiasts, or base and impious pretenders. And all this, when an accidental discovery of a single moral truth or respectable wise saying, among a cart-load of vulgarity, sophisms, and nonsense of Heathen extraction, is quite enough to sanctify a whole system of philosophy. They appear to be so completely baptized into this prejudice, that they want little besides a few portable divinities, to identify them with the disciples of some antiquated and long since exploded Pagan theory.

To say nothing of the moral aspect of the Mosaic dispensation, there is enough to recommend it, at least, to respectful consideration, if not to unqualified approbation. Let any one attentively read the benevolent provisions of the Law, for the "*stranger*, the fatherless, and the widow," so often repeated, and so variously modified in its objects and bearings, and then ask himself whether there is nothing useful, or appropriate, or necessary in its requirements? Thus it is said, "Thou shalt neither vex a stranger nor oppress him.....ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child." When the time of the vintage and the harvest came, the Hebrews were forbidden to gather the whole for themselves—the scattering bunches of grapes—the corners of the field—the forgotten sheaf—must be left for the "stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." Once in three years, every householder

was required to bring out a portion expressly set apart for the use of the "Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." Where else in all the wide world, shall we find any specific, and appropriate, and well-ordered arrangements for these classes of persons? The murdered traveller, the plundered caravan, the Christian prisoner and slave, bear ample and appalling testimony to the benevolent provisions of the system of Mahommed! Its well-known maxim is, "No faith with infidels"—by which is meant, all who do not profess the faith of Mahommed. And until since the recollection of many of the present generation, this rule was carried out in fearful practice. Piracies of the most atrocious description, under the connivance of the Sublime Porte, and at the very foot of the throne of the successors of Mahommed, were only prevented by purchase and tribute, until our own government applied a more effectual remedy, and taught the Mussulman, what the Koran never did—to respect the rights of strangers. Let the skeptic review the history of the infamous and unprovoked robberies and murders committed upon merchants and travellers, under the sanction of the Arabian prophet, and by his followers, and then, if he dare, assert that there is a perfect parallel, or any parallel at all, between the institutions of Moses and Mahommed.

It need scarcely be remarked, that among the Heathens, there were no suitable provisions for the

"stranger, the fatherless, and the widow." But it should be admitted, that the courtesies and even charities of social life, were in general better maintained by them, than they have ever been by Mahommedans. A species of conventional hospitality entitled the stranger to protection, and civility to a limited extent, in some Pagan countries. This philosophy encouraged, but went no further. And man was left to the operation of his undirected sympathies, in giving or withholding charity, unimpressed by the sanctions of authority either human or divine. So that, in fact, the Mosaic institution stands alone, transcendently above any and all other systems, except the Christian, in its hospitable and benevolent provisions for the solitary alien, the helpless and distressed. And how is this to be accounted for? Must we suppose the author of the Hebrew institutions, so much more humane than all the world besides—not only more so than the age in which he lived, but pre-eminently more so than any age of philosophy and Gentilism? Certainly, skeptics and unbelievers will not admit all this, without at least heaving a sigh over the comparative degradation of their venerated philosophers! But this they must admit, or admit his inspiration!

But we must not suspend this comparison of the humanity and kindness of the legal dispensation, with other systems, as yet. And, however reluctantly, the skeptic must go with us through a few

more particulars, evincive of the superior benevolence of the Mosaic system—that system which he considers so repugnant to all good sense and sound philosophy. Does he so view it, because it is so superior in philanthropy to any merely human theory, or because it is so repugnant to some of the practices which the interests and policies of men have rendered it convenient for them to pursue? Some of its venerable requisitions, it would be particularly gratifying to see more generally embodied in Christian practice, and, especially, illustrated in a more benevolent treatment of the poor. And were this done, it would exclude some of the speculations built on human suffering, and annihilate much of the wealth wrung from the hand of the sons of poverty—often, of industry.

From time immemorial, it seems to have been the practice for one man to borrow of another, what he particularly wanted, and could not command by other honorable means. And the inference usually corresponds with the fact, that in a great majority of cases, the poor borrow, and the rich lend. The hazard incurred of losing the thing or the amount loaned, naturally suggested some expedient for rendering payment certain. This we call security. One of these expedients always has been, the acceptance of some article of the required value, as a *pledge*. And it appears to have been customary with the Hebrews, to pledge some article of clothing, or of common and necessary use in

the business of life. All this was very proper—and all this is still done in most countries, in the every day transactions of man with man. But how is it done? Is the least attention paid to the wants or the privations of him who makes the pledge? Is a thought apparently turned upon the sacrifice which the poor may make, by giving security in this manner? Is not interest, rather than the comfort or the wants of the needy, the great matter of concern, and the established and acknowledged rule of action? And does not the lender, accordingly, pursue every means that law or public opinion will warrant, in order to compel the payment of his dues, regardless of all wants, or interests, except his own?

Now it is questionable whether the skeptic is aware of the regulations prescribed by the Mosaic institution, in relation to pledges. If he is not, he may be surprised to find that they are such as no worlding, or oppressor, or impostor, alike reckless of means or measures to compass his ends, would be likely to impose! They are indeed far, very far from every thing of the kind. For they breathe a spirit of genuine charity and kindness, such as no other then existing institutions knew, and such as no part of mankind, save the Hebrews, have ever practiced with equal fidelity. But let them speak for themselves. "If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him, by that the sun goeth down." "If the man

be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge; in any case, thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee." Provision is also made for preventing the acceptance of certain indispensable articles of common use. Thus—"No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge; for he taketh a man's life to pledge."

Are these benevolent arrangements, the indications of total apathy to the welfare of the distressed? Are they to be regarded as the exclusive offspring of personal interest? or are they the unmeaning aberrations of a fanatic's mind? or yet, the unprincipled and unhallowed usurpations dictated by an unfeeling impostor? Can they with decency, or sense, or honesty, be ascribed to either? And if not, they prove their author to have been more than three thousand years in advance of his age, inconceivably more benevolent than the best of the Heathens—or, what is infinitely more reasonable, that he was inspired. Their existence only among the Hebrews, proves, also, that while they were known to be the most useful and benevolent institutions in all the world, the philosophers and moralists of other lands, were too vain of their own theories to adopt them. And we leave it to the advocates of the all-sufficiency of the light of nature, to determine whether they are not, at this day, rejecting "the counsel of God against themselves," in the same way, and for the same reasons.

Another benevolent provision of the Mosaic Law, relates to *usury*. "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer; neither shalt thou lay upon him usury." And this prohibition is repeated under such modifications of expression, as leave no doubt respecting its import, or of the moral bearings to which it was directed. Where shall we look for an instance of attention to the circumstances of the poor, like this, among the high-sounding institutions of a worldly philosophy? Where else can we find an insurmountable barrier interposed for the protection of the poor against the rich—the weak against the strong? And can any man in conscience say, that this looks like courting the favor and countenance of the most powerful and influential class of the nation, and building up and establishing authority without right—divine right?

We do not particularly object to the established custom of paying interest for the use of money. The borrower is, or ought to be, benefited by its use; and it is difficult to conceive of any reason why he should not render a suitable compensation for the privilege, except that assigned by the law under consideration—the national kindred, and poverty of the borrower. However this may be, it is certain that the modern *shaver* would find himself sadly bereft of his gains, were he brought under the unflinching regulations of the Hebrew Lawgiver. A fact that may aid in accounting for the

antipathy of certain members of that fraternity against the Bible, and who appear to hold the Pentateuch in special and utter abomination. We may be assured, that neither the light of nature, nor human policy, nor yet the wisdom of an exclusive philosophy, ever dictated these benevolent provisions for the needy. It remained for the Hebrew institutions alone, to recognize the true principles of human kindness, and to enforce them under sanctions from which the heart can make no appeal.—And these considerations, when the age of the world and the general state of morals are taken into the account, constitute a mass of unimpeachable testimony, which it seems impossible to resist, in favor of the inspiration of the author of the Pentateuch.

One of the most remarkable regulations that ever distinguished legislation, remains to be noticed. It is the universal right of resuming personal freedom, and all possessions previously alienated, whether by the misfortunes or indiscretions of the individual concerned. "And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years, shall be unto thee forty and nine years.—And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possessions, and ye shall return every man unto his family."

It will doubtless be observed, that similar laws were occasionally introduced among the Romans; and that, consequently, this is but a common instance of agrarianism. But here the objector is mistaken: there is no general resemblance, much less parity, in the respective instances. The Roman law was, at least, but a temporary expedient for special purposes. The Hebrew, on the contrary, was one of early and perpetual institution, and was never suspended when its application was practicable. The Roman agrarian law seized upon the immense possessions of the affluent, and distributed them *only among citizens*, while it left every servant and menial in the commonwealth, to all the wretchedness of poverty and oppression. At the same time, its operation was both oppressive and unjust, in its entire disregard of the rights of the rich. On the contrary, the law of the jubilee was instituted long before any Hebrew came into possession of a single foot of territory. Their inheritance was also to be equally divided, in the first instance, among the individuals of the whole nation, except a single family. And in every purchase of either land or slaves, the purchaser was previously instructed to graduate the price by a careful estimate of the number of years to the jubilee. "According to the number of years after the jubilee, thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee—according to the multitude of

years, thou shalt increase the price thereof; and according to the fewness of years, thou shalt diminish the price of it." In this case, neither party was wronged; while every bond-servant, male and female, was restored to freedom, and every portionless family acquired competence.

In view of these peculiar and humane provisions of the Mosaic institutions, it is surprising that many honest Christians believe that the Law—in all its bearings, objects, and requirements—was abolished by the Gospel. And it is to be feared, that by so doing, they have contributed greatly to the general disgust entertained by unbelievers against the Old Testament, and especially against the Pentateuch. For, however we may concede that these regulations might with propriety be modified in some respects, when brought into universal application—still, it seems impossible to suppose that the Gospel could be designed to expunge them forever from the catalogue of human obligations. But whether this be so, or not, can not affect the argument with unbelievers. It remains for them to account for the existence of these requirements, on their own hypothesis, that Moses was no better than Mahommed, or that he was not inspired.

CHAPTER IV.

SUPERSTITION.

It will not be doubted, that one of the most extraordinary traits of human character, is its tendency to superstition. And however we may be told that superstition is the index, as it is the never-failing concomitant of ignorance, it is, nevertheless, an ignorance which has very generally prevailed in all ages, and among all classes of mankind. By superstition, is here meant the belief in diabolical spirits, ghosts, and hobgoblins, and the consequent apprehension of their witcheries and sorceries. All of which, the skeptic or unbeliever will probably admit to be wholly unworthy of the serious regard or respect of reasonable and enlightened men. So far, then, all are agreed—and it remains that we apply this admission to the comparative conduct of the sacred writers and Gentile philosophers, with a view to ascertain their respective claims to consistency, reason, and sound philosophy.

Now, there is throughout the Bible, a constant series of facts, which conclusively prove, that the sacred penmen regarded these popular superstitions not only with disapprobation, but as utterly repugnant to the purity of religion and morality.

And they are particularly explicit in the avowal of their own opinions, as well as definite in the expression of the views which they would have others entertain respecting this subject. Thus giving to their productions the appearance of some solicitude, lest they might at some period be misunderstood. They are no less distinguished for their opinions relating to this subject, than for many other things by which they were so signally set apart from the rest of mankind. And in this, as in others, their views and principles are shown to be of a higher origin than can be consistently claimed for the productions of any other class of writers. It proves that they were inspired, or were infinitely sounder thinkers, as well as better moralists, than any other part of the world could boast. A few examples will illustrate and prove what is here assumed.

In the Pentateuch—a part of the Bible which unbelievers hold in particular and profound detestation—Moses says, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizzard, or a necromancer.....For these nations which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." Again, in reference to the same subject, he says, "Regard not them that have familiar spi-

tits, neither seek after wizzards, to be defiled by them."

The language of these prohibitions, is too plain to admit of misapprehension. And they embody and establish several facts which the skeptic will do well to notice. One of these is, that the Canaanitish nations were addicted to a most loathsome, gross, and degrading superstition, which encouraged a set of pretenders, jugglers, soothsayers, and diviners, and which also embraced among its consequences, the inhuman practice of sacrificing children to Moloch, the fire-god. This catalogue of witches, wizzards, necromancers, and consequently the whole machinery of demons, ghosts, and vampires, are plainly of Heathen origin.

Another important fact is, that the Hebrews were forbidden, in the most express and comprehensive terms, to show any countenance or favor towards these pretensions. They were not permitted to adopt any of these opinions or practices, nor might they suffer those who did, to live among them. No part of this formidable system of superstition, can even remotely be attributed to the Mosaic dispensation. So far from this, the language above quoted, shows, that the Israelites were required to consider it as utterly false and infamous, alike unworthy of men, and offensive to Heaven.

Another equally interesting and important fact is, that the Hebrews were taught to regard this system of demonology and jugglery, not only as false

and fabulous, but as matter of positive moral *defilement*. Nor was this a subject of empty speculation alone—it was carried into practice. And during many ages, except in times of general and notorious apostacy, they are not chargeable with the folly and impiety of believing in or countenancing witchcraft, or of suffering the terrors of demoniacal visitation.

That we are correct in relation to this matter, is further shown by the manner in which the Hebrew writers speak of what they call their wicked kings. Thus, of Manasseh it is said, that "he made his son to pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizzards." And all this was done under such aggravations of guilt, as to induce the further remark, that he seduced the people to "do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel." There is no possibility of mistaking the meaning of this quotation. And it shows that the acknowledged rule of action and sentiment among the Hebrews, in all ages, was the same in relation to superstition. What Moses had established, was authoritative in this, as in other particulars, and except during seasons of undoubted apostacy, was never for a moment called in question.

The prophets, in a variety of ways, speak of the superstitions of the Heathens. Sometimes they seriously rebuke their nation for inclining to their

adoption—at others, they treat the subject of prognostication and witchcraft, with playful irony, or bitter sarcasm and contempt; but always in a manner that clearly shows that they rejected every part of the entire system of demonology. Jeremiah writes—"Thus saith the Lord, learn not the way of the Heathen, and be not dismayed at the *signs of heaven*; for the Heathen are dismayed at them." Isaiah says, that the Lord had forsaken his people, because they were "*soothsayers* like the Philistines"—and he rebukes them in no very measured terms, for their idolatry. "Their land is full of *idols*; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made..... And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself." On another occasion he taunts the idolators in this style—"Seek unto them that have *familiar spirits, and unto wizzards* that peep, and that mutter—should not a people seek unto their god?" The high and low stand openly rebuked, in these instances; while the whole system of divination is contemptuously exploded.

But it is not necessary to multiply quotations.—It is indisputable that the institutions of Moses constituted the only acknowledged rule of faith and practice among the Hebrews, at all times, and under all circumstances, when they can be supposed to act upon their own peculiar principles. Accordingly we may expect to find—just what we do find every where scattered throughout the sacred

writings—allusions more or less distinct, to the identical prohibitions of witchcraft and demonology, under consideration. And in every instance of such reference by the prophets, it is done in perfect accordance with the maxims of their great Lawgiver. Kings, in several instances, acted upon this authority, and expelled or put to death the pretenders to what is termed a *familiar spirit*, or a spirit of divination. And the fooleries and abominations of superstition, in all its forms, are held up for the nation's abhorrence, in contrast with the substantial truths and useful instructions of the oracles of God.

To these remarks it will probably be objected, that, in defiance of the institutions of Moses, the power and authority of kings, and the remonstrances and rebukes of the prophets, the Hebrews, at different periods, appear to have fallen into the common error respecting the belief of invisible spirits, and finally to have universally sunk into a faith in ghosts, witches, and demons.

All this is cheerfully admitted—but neither the facts nor their admission, affect the position assumed and proved, that the Hebrew institutions disavowed and reprobated the whole scheme of idolatry and superstition. On the contrary, it serves more fully and conclusively to shew, that the whole nation had eventually *departed* from their own acknowledged principles; and, at the same time, to exhibit in stronger light, and to hold up to higher admiration, the extraordinary men who

taught them to reject the whole system of demonology, and to regard its instruments and abettors, as the corruptors and enemies of mankind. Nothing can be more marvellous, than the character which is thus unequivocally confirmed to their great Lawgiver, their prophets, and the wisest and best of their kings!

But the unbeliever is concerned to know, by what means the Hebrews came to believe in all the Pagan superstitions—and, especially, why this belief became so much more identical with the last ages of their national existence. The reasons, and the process by which this was effected, were both easy and natural. The Hebrews, for some five hundred years previous to the Christian era, were successively tributary to the Chaldeans, Greeks, and Romans; whose mythological systems were substantially one and the same. For, setting aside the consideration of the particular deities which they worshipped, and some minor peculiarities in the prevailing systems of philosophy, neither of which is involved in the present instance, they entertained the same general views of matter and spirit, and spiritual existences, and the same notions concerning the state of the dead. Among them all, the belief in ghosts and in demoniacal possessions, appears to have been universal. And it was perfectly natural for the Hebrews, in their necessary intercourse with them, to imbibe, to a greater or lesser extent, the views and princi-

ples of their conquerors. And that they did imbibe them, there is abundant evidence.

The Chaldeans supposed the existence of different grades of spiritual beings—"gods, demons, heroes." And besides these, the oriental nations generally, "and among the rest, the Chaldeans, admitted the existence of *certain evil spirits*, clothed in a vehicle of grosser matter; and in subduing or counteracting these, they placed a great part of the efficacy of their religious incantations." The great oracle of the oriental world, Zoroaster, maintained that there are "various orders of spiritual beings, gods or demons, which are *more or less perfect*, as they are at a greater or lesser distance in the course of emanation from the eternal fountain of intelligence."

It was plainly from Babylon, that the Hebrews brought the rudiments of that system of demonology, which was gradually incorporated with their own, and which, in the process of a few ages, was perfected under other influences, in its power over the public mind. Here, Heathenism first fixed, deeply and permanently, its hold upon the recipients of revelation, and inspired the faith of infernal agency in the production of human ills. And here, the belief in "certain evil spirits, clothed in *grosser matter*," successfully induced the Israelites to adopt the farther opinion, that they were gross enough to be seen. Hence evil demons and sturdy ghosts, were as common as other visitors—always

viewed as the messengers of evil, and the necessary associates of darkness and misfortune.

Socrates, the father of the Greek moral philosophy, and the patron-saint of modern unbelievers, was a believer in, and promoter of the doctrine of familiar spirits, or demons. And it is not a little remarkable, that, with the admiration of his many noble virtues and excellences, which amounts almost to idolatry, skeptics appear not to perceive that he entertained views respecting demons and auguries, for which they affect to despise some weak and superstitious Christians. Is it indeed so, that the faults of a favorite are sanctified by what are esteemed his better and more amiable qualities; and that these very qualities are rendered despicable, and false, and hateful, by the contaminating influence of similar faults in those against whom, and whose opinions, we have imbibed a prejudice? So it appears, in this case. For Socrates "believed the divine origin of dreams and omens, and *publicly declared that he was accompanied by a demon or invisible conductor*, whose frequent interposition stopped him from the commission of evil, and the guilt of misconduct." A good demon is no doubt intended in this instance, because his influence resulted in preventing the commission of evil. But it is very evident that he would, for the same reason, ascribe the evil actions of wicked men to the machinations of malignant demons. The authority for these statements, will,

it is hoped, be entirely satisfactory, as it is derived from Heathen writers, among whom are Diodorus and Plato.

The most distinguished disciple of Socrates was Plato, who evidently imbibed the superstitions of his master. He maintained that the "souls of men were formed from the *remainder* of the rational soul of the world, which had previously given existence to the *invisible gods and demons*." He also maintained the doctrine of "ideal forms, and the pre-existence of the human mind."* The same general opinions were, with trifling modifications, universally adopted by the multitude of philosophers, who subsequently flourished in the Heathen world. To multiply instances, is only to repeat what has been already quoted, and which, none will dispute, exhibits the sentiments of those to whom these superstitions are ascribed. It is, therefore, an established truth, that the whole race of Pagan philosophers *believed and taught* what an apostle calls "the doctrine of devils;" and that the most eminent among them, like the most ignorant and superstitious, maintained that mankind were the subjects of their visitation, and of their beneficent or diabolical influences.

In view, therefore, of the universal prevalence of this general system of demonology among the Heathens, and also of the further fact, that the He-

*Enfield's History of Philosophy, and Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, for these extracts.

brews were for ages the tributaries of those very nations whose pre-eminence in arms and arts, secured the transmission of their mythology to other times, as well as its general adoption during their triumphs—we must cease to wonder that the institutions of Moses were corrupted by exotic superstitions. Where the Law was silent, the Hebrew would feel at liberty to innovate—where its injunctions were absolute, ingenuity would contrive evasions. And the inducements to do both, were urgent and perpetual, in view of the captivating splendor of a popular philosophy, and in the natural desire of pleasing their conquerors.

From these considerations, the inference is plain, not to say unavoidable, that the system of demonology, with all its parts and appendages, with all its supposed possessions and real terrors, is of Heathen origin. And, as if to render this conclusion so obvious, as to exclude all possibility of mistake, the proof is abundant and clear, that while Heathenism cherished and promoted, by its most refined philosophy, all the grossness of superstition, the Hebrew institutions rejected the whole as fabulous and absurd.

It will probably be objected in this place, that, however clear the proof may be that the Mosaic institution rejected and forbade the system of demonology and witchcraft, it is quite obvious that it is recognized and approved by Christianity—that many of the reputed miracles of Christ, were

professedly wrought in the expulsion of demons, which implies their admission by the great Founder of the Christian system; and that there are reasons for believing that his followers were of the same opinion.

The plausibility of this objection has misled many, though its unsoundness must be apparent to every careful reader of the New Testament.* The instances in which the miraculous powers of Jesus are said to have been exerted in the expulsion of demons, are plainly cases of lunacy or madness, palsy, blindness, epilepsy, and a few other diseases. Of this, any one can satisfy himself, by carefully observing the description of the respective cases. Take, for instance, the man among the tombs, the person who was occasionally thrown into the fire or water, and another who is expressly said to have "a demon, and is lunatic," and it is believed that none can mistake the facts. These instances not only show, that demoniacal possession was ascribed to the plainest cases of disease, but they enhance the value, and demonstrate the certainty of the miracles. For they leave no room for cavil respecting the apparent removal of what the skeptic might otherwise call imaginary diseases. Nor, in either case, do they furnish any evidence that our Saviour entertained the least con-

*Lardner on cases of Demoniacs—4to ed. England.

fidence in, or designed to give the popular opinion any encouragement.

It is too evident to need the labor of argument or proof, that the whole fabric of demonology rests upon the doctrine of the existence of different grades of spiritual beings, *some good and others evil*, and upon the supposed pre-existence of souls. For, certainly, if it were not believed that these existed, it could not be supposed that they could possess and and torment, as well as occasionally visit and alarm mankind. And we have seen, that the philosophers believed in the emanation of successive eons, or spiritual beings, good and bad, from the supreme mind, before that of human souls. Now, this doctrine is very expressly disavowed by our Saviour. This appears from his answer to the question of his disciples—"Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"—than which, nothing can more distinctly convey the idea of his having existed and acted in some previous state, and that his present misfortune was the result of former wickedness in himself or his parents. Let it be remembered, then, that Jesus *positively denies* that the blindness of the person referred to, was either the result of sin, or of any supposed pre-existence—"neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, that he was born blind." His silence in other cases, can not, therefore, be construed into their admission—it only proves that he did not, in all cases, choose to meet and repel the superstitions

of his countrymen. But we shall see that his disciples rebuked this lying spirit of Heathen creation, with all the firmness and decision which the subject demanded.

It is well known, that the Heathens believed their deities to be superhuman spirits, and that they were present in some mysterious manner, with the images by which they were represented. The idol and the god were, therefore, supposed to be identical. And to reject the one, was to deny and reject the other. This is accordingly done by the apostle Paul, in the following distinct and intelligible manner:—"As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, *we know that an idol is nothing in the world*, and that there is none other God, but one." It is difficult to conceive of terms which would convey the idea of an utter rejection of the system of demonology, more distinctly and in a more comprehensive manner, than is done in this quotation. Nor is this all: the apostle appears to speak in the name of the whole Christian community—"we know"—and in a subsequent instance, in relation to the same general subject, "to us"—terms that imply the well-known prevalence of the same common views. Whatever, then, the opinions of Christians may have become in the general corruption of the dark ages, it is sufficiently clear, that primitive Christianity was exempt from the

charge of a superstitious belief in the existence or power of infernal spirits.

Again—it is notorious that the system or doctrine of *emanation*, maintained by Plato, either directly or indirectly led to the belief of a succession of eons, or spiritual existences, whose natures gradually receded from the perfections of the "soul of the world," in an infinitely descending series. In this way, certain Platonists peopled the atmosphere with myriads of invisible demons. Some of the first Gentile Christians were converts from this system of speculative philosophy, and were evidently very anxious to introduce their views into the Christian church. How well they succeeded, we need not inquire; since the whole machinery of saintship or intercessory mediators of the Papal church, and the ghosts and witches of the Protestant, are very obviously derived from the modifications of this very opinion.

No attentive reader of the New Testament, can have failed to remark, that the apostles labored to induce the Christian congregations, to repel every attempt to palm upon them these fabulous notions of a vain philosophy. They use a language, too, in relation to this subject, which scarcely admits of mistake, and which never has been misunderstood by ecclesiastical writers of tolerable candor and intelligence.* Thus, the apostle, in writing to the

*See Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History—Priestley's History Christian Church, and others.

Galatians, enumerated "idolatry and witchcraft" as kindred parts of the same system, and which are to be avoided as among the works of the flesh, and hindrances to an entrance into the kingdom of God, or the Gospel. He assures Timothy, that the church would in time apostatize from the simplicity of the faith, by "giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines concerning demons." A fact, that abundantly and clearly proves that these were not then considered legitimate parts of Christianity. And again, he admonishes him not to "give heed to fables and *endless genealogies*, which minister questions rather than godly edifying." Nothing can more appropriately designate the popular theory of the emanation of the eons, than the language of this passage. The same view is further urged by this apostle, in his directions to Titus to "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law," assuring him that they were "unprofitable and vain." Here, as in the former instance, by *genealogies*, those respecting the derivation of the eons, are intended, as those of the Jewish law were never matters of question in relation to the circumstances of the Gentiles, nor were they supposed of any importance to the Gospel minister.

From these examples—and they can be multiplied to the heart's content of any one—it is put beyond reasonable doubt, that the writers of the New Testament, like those of the Old, rejected the entire

system of demonology. And, indeed, we could not expect to find, in an improved system of morals and religion, standing as the Gospel plainly and avowedly does, in the most intimate connexion with the Hebrew economy, the admission of principles and doctrines from the Heathens, which were so distinctly prohibited by the legal dispensation. The accordance of the several parts of the whole system of revealed religion, might have been safely and certainly argued without an appeal to instances. But the instances given, leave no ground of cavil; for they prove beyond question, that both the Jewish and Christian dispensations maintain, in this respect, the same principles, and reject, as unworthy of faith or confidence, and equally foolish and injurious, absurd and wicked, the doctrine of demonology, and all its concomitants.

If, therefore, the Hebrews and Christians, when best obeying their respective institutions, were free from those superstitions which constitute the common subjects of vulgar credulity, why are they called superstitious? Was the unbeliever ignorant of the fact, that what he calls, and rightly calls superstition, is the exclusive production of his proud systems of philosophy inspired by the mere light of nature? If he was ignorant of this, why has he ventured to be so confident, when the means of correct information are easily obtained? But if he was not ignorant of it, how can he excuse himself for charging upon the Bible an influence

which it has not, but which attaches exclusively to his own favorite views? And if the sacred writers must be called superstitious, what name is befitting the gross and contemptible credulity of the philosophers who fabricated the doctrines of ghosts and diabolical spirits, and who were themselves the dupes and slaves of their own terrors and silly hallucinations?

We must now be permitted to ask the unbeliever to assign a competent reason, if he can, for the facts which have here been presented for his consideration. Why, with the universal example of mankind before him, should the Hebrew Lawgiver have departed so widely from the superstitions of the whole world? Why were the prophets and the whole nation, when best obeying and illustrating the spirit of their institutions, entirely exempt from all belief in, or fear of, the various and multiplied demons, ghosts, and spiritual powers which haunted the Heathens from time immemorial? Why did the apostles and primitive Christians, with the exception of certain would-be philosophers among the Gentile converts, reject with contempt and abhorrence, the "endless genealogies," "old wives' fables," "idolatry, witchcraft," and "doctrines of demons," that constituted the superstitions of the rest of mankind? These are problems which infidelity never has solved, and never can solve without abandoning its principles and pretensions. It possesses no means of accounting for

these facts, on its own hypothesis! For it assumes that the light of nature is, and always was, sufficient for the guidance of man, in all cases—but it is compelled to admit, that this very light led men into superstitions which the sacred writers rejected, and which unbelievers now affect to despise. It assumes that Socrates, Plato, and other Heathens, were more consistent men, and more profound philosophers, than Moses or Christ—but it is forced to acknowledge that these admired philosophers were absurd enough to be grossly superstitious and idolatrous, from which the Patriarchs and the Master of Christians are entirely exempt. It assumes that the Mosaic and Christian dispensations are the foster-parents of all the fanaticism and superstition of the world—while the fact stands proved by the prohibitions and rebukes which both have uttered against the philosophical theories of the Heathens, that they are, and ever have been entirely exempt from such imputation!

And how can infidelity maintain its position, and make—what it must do—all these concessions? How can it consider a few philosophers as the only miracles of mind and moral excellence—how regard the Bible as the exclusive instrument of superstition, while the latter rejects, and the former maintains the system of demonology? It can not, we repeat, maintain its position, and account for these facts, on its own principles. It must cease to regard Socrates as the most illustrious specimen of

human wisdom—or it must admit that the sacred writers were inspired. Take your choice, gentlemen unbelievers, for, in either case, you admit what in your estimation amounts to a miracle! And the admission of either, will annihilate forever the charms and the parade of Heathen philosophy, and place the Bible where it ought to be—high in the estimation of all mankind. But the most obvious and reasonable conclusion is, that because the sacred writers were not superstitious, therefore they were inspired.

CHAPTER V.

SOCIAL SYSTEM.

No fact is more fully established, or better understood, than this—that man is a social being. His mental capacities, his surprising powers of speech, and his kind and generous sympathies and affections, all impel him to seek and maintain the fellowship of his species. Add to these, his wants and his interests, and he will form associations with a greater or lesser number of individuals, proportioned to his views of the importance of the end to be attained. So that while one man is satisfied with the society of a few relatives, or neighbors, another whose prejudices are fewer, or whose business or profession leads him to broader views, enlarges the sphere of his affections, by endeavoring to acquire friends in every place and on every occasion in which he comes in contact with man. This is denominated the *social principle*. Whatever, therefore, has a tendency to widen the field of its operation, or to augment the happiness of all concerned, is termed *a social system*. And that which secures these objects in their broadest extent, and with the greatest certainty, is the best and most worthy of adoption.

But this supposes that the social principle needs direction, or rather instruction, in order to the attainment of its proper and highest end—the perfection of social intercourse. And the directions for its attainment, should be such as meet all social wants, and adapt themselves to all ages and conditions of mankind. For since men are constituted alike, the shades of character produced by diversity of condition, furnish no exception to the general rule. Nor do the local prejudices growing out of the consideration of family, country, or party, and which engraft themselves upon the features of the social state, materially influence the nature or character of the means requisite for the attainment of the highest social good. The means, then, whatever they are, must operate, or be calculated to operate uniformly upon all classes of society, and throughout all time, in order to effect the best social results. And our inquiries should be directed to ascertain whether such a system has been devised and published, as embraces in its legitimate operations the highest social improvement and consequent happiness of mankind.

It is very cheerfully admitted, that in the infancy of society, many defects must have existed, which experience alone would rectify—and that others would be remedied or removed, by the progress of science, and arts, and civilization. But it is an established and well-attested fact, that neither experience, nor science, nor civilization, nor the attain-

ment of the necessary or fine arts—no, nor the highest acknowledged philosophical discoveries, accomplished the desired end of social existence. Neither were the approximations made by all these, towards the attainment of that end, sufficient to warrant the belief that they were adapted to its accomplishment. All these united, did little more than improve the physical condition of mankind; while they left the wisest among them, to feel the conviction that something more was necessary to the perfection of society, without aiding them to discover its nature or mode of operation.

It will doubtless be readily admitted, that whatever improves the morals, refines the manners, expands the charities and benevolent affections, and renders the properties and persons most secure, of the greatest number of individuals, is at the same time, the system best adapted to our social nature.

1. Now that *none* of the systems of philosophy met the wants of mankind, in any one of these particulars, there is abundant evidence. For the propriety and uses of theory, are determined by the working in its application. And however true it is, that some of the Heathens, as Socrates, were examples of moral virtue; still their principles were so defective, that neither their precepts nor example had any perceptible influence upon the moral condition of their countrymen, or the world. The reason is contained in their systems, which

required men to be philosophers, and their theories were speculative rather than practical—or if practical, they were neutralized by the admission of other and opposite practices. And while it is admitted that their systems were splendid in theory, it must, on the other hand, be also admitted, that no corresponding practice ever followed, except in a very few individuals. Indeed, any thing like a consistent system of morality, was little known, and still less regarded. For as all the philosophers considered the soul and body as no farther related than a prisoner to his cell, they consequently regarded the wants and acts of the body, whether virtuous or vicious, of very little importance. It is manifest, therefore, that though this opinion might produce no evil effect upon the mere philosopher, it could have no good effect upon the mass of mere mankind. And so long as revenge was considered a virtue, and public prostitution and the lowest excesses as parts of religion, the philosopher would in vain insist on the duties of chastity and temperance, or teach the propriety of loving enemies.

2. Of the exercise of the benevolent affections, we have spoken elsewhere. But we may be permitted to remark again, in this place, that the maxims of the philosophers never were, and never could be carried into effect on their own principles. For the same system that taught the exercise of kindness towards friends, and mercy to a prostrate

enemy under certain circumstances, also taught that it was pusillanimity not to revenge an insult, and pursue an enemy to his overthrow or death. How far, then, could benevolence proceed, when thus encumbered with obstructions and limitations? Let the eternal feuds, and animosities, and massacres, and assassinations, which mark the career of the most refined nations of antiquity, answer! The pages which record their history, are emphatically written in blood—not of the national enemies alone, but of their most worthy and honored sons. Personal friendships did indeed exist; but seldom where the means of rivalry could interpose. And where these existed, their influence and results are illustrated in the case of Brutus and Julius Cesar, and in Mark Antony, Lepidus, and Augustus. All human ties dissolved before the magic touch of personal interest; and all plighted faith was mere form, when weighed in the balance against some remembered injury, or the sheer pretence of political zeal.

3. In the necessary operation of the principles of self-interest, and the sanguinary system of revenge, there was little room for the protection of property, or personal security. The strong usually oppressed the weak; and the minions of power seized and appropriated the estates of any and of all whom they chose to regard with envy for their wealth, or of whose power and influence they felt any apprehension. And the banishment or assassination of

rivals, were the every-day occurrences of the most enlightened ages of the Greeks and Romans, and under their most renowned social and political institutions. Let him who doubts this, read the histories of those nations—select the most favored periods, and, if he pleases, when their best systems of philosophy were exerting their widest and most beneficent influence, and he will find that they are times of national splendor, of the triumph of arts, of men of pre-eminent talents, and of depraved morals. And all these, and more than these, under the very meridian light and influence of that proud philosophy whose decline is so desperately bewailed by the whole family of modern unbelievers.

The great difficulty encountered by the systems of philosophy, was their want of general adaptation to the moral and social condition of mankind. They met the case of the mere philosopher, the man of leisure and scientific pursuits, so far as either was abstracted from the collisions of interest, the race for fame, or the struggle for place, or power, or empire. But even popular favor was sufficient to make unflinching rivals of Plato and Xenophon. The best systems were but mere cobwebs, which were instantly brushed away by the considerations of expediency, or interest, or passion.—They never took permanent hold of the affections of the heart, nor became the governing principles of action. So far from this, they were held as general and abstract truths, furnishing subjects of

speculation and discourse, and themes of declamation. They were never designed to remove a single superstition, or to abolish a single custom of the multitude; nor were they calculated to suppress one of the popular vices. They were rather intended to widen and confirm the distinction between the high and low, the learned and ignorant, than for reducing all to a common standard, and approximating all minds towards one given point of social and moral perfection.

The result was precisely what might be expected, under the existing circumstances—that though the social condition of man was improved, it was still far from being what any enlightened people of the present day, would think tolerable or supportable. No system of merely human origin, had fully met the social wants of mankind. None has yet done so. None has effected more than partial improvements in society, or more than half civilized its subjects. The overwhelming evidence of all that is here assumed, is written upon the history of the most cultivated nations of antiquity, and is impressed upon the present social condition of every people and family on earth, who have not been blessed with the light and influence of Christianity.

The Hebrew system was immensely better adapted to the situation and social wants of those for whom it was intended, than any merely philosophical theory which the world ever produced. It was limited, it is true, to a particular people;

but it was clearly designed to benefit and improve every member of their social compact. It had but one rule for the monarch and the subject—for the heads of families, and their respective members—for the elders in the gate, and the meanest citizen. It bound every member of the commonwealth to the acquisition of the same knowledge, and to the practice of the same duties. It based the power of its social influences, not upon abstract and speculative opinions, but upon practical moral principles. And these principles were designed to reach, and did reach and influence every department of society. They regulated the offices and duties of religion, the institutions of civil government, the personal intercourse of man with man, and the domestic arrangements of every household. With this, there is no parallel in the history of all the rest of mankind. No where else, was every parent a professed and duly constituted teacher of political science, morality, and religion. The Hebrew father was indeed a *peripatetic* in mode; for his instructions were given during his labor in the field, and as he walked by the way, as well as at his fireside.—But he was a teacher of truths, incalculably more sublime and practical, than ever entered the mind of Aristotle, or any other Heathen philosopher.

Leaving the consideration of the social system of the Hebrews, whose institutions were limited in their operations to that extraordinary people, we may turn our attention to the social character of

the Christian dispensation. Like the Hebrew economy, Christianity was designed for, and adapted to all the possible subjects of its influence—but, unlike that dispensation, it meets the social wants of all mankind. And as the result of this adaptation, it has long since effected for man, what nothing else ever did or could accomplish. It has humanized more hearts than all other systems since the creation; and it has inspired and diffused a kindness and charity, which will finally give peace and concord to the world. It has inspired principles, which regulate and control the passions; and it has purified the fountains of human thought and action. It has exalted one-half of our species, where men have received and cherished its spirit; and placed WOMAN in the station worthy of the importance of those duties, which she was evidently destined to perform. And it has accordingly improved the morality, and enlightened the intercourse, and refined and softened the manners and customs, and liberalized the institutions of men, wherever its benign light has been diffused.

Will it be contended that the light of nature and philosophy were sufficient for these things? Why then were they not done? The world was evidently left to its own resources and expedients quite long enough, even on the Scripture chronology, to effect these objects, had human wisdom been sufficient for their accomplishment! And we would by all means have the skeptic inform us—

on his own theory, that man eternally existed—how long he would have us wait for the development of these results. For if a whole past eternity was not sufficient to teach philosophers, by the mere *light of nature*, a single system which can be deemed respectable for its social influences, can he feel assured that a similar terrestrial eternity to come, would produce any better effects? And if he would blush for the anti-social aspect of even Greek and Roman refinement, engrafted upon the courtesies of modern times, he ought also to blush for being the advocate of a theory which would restore it to the world, by extinguishing the light of Christianity. Every moment of time that the unbeliever adds to the chronology of the Bible, must add to his embarrassment in assigning a reason why the world was not wiser and better before the era of the Gospel. For if one-half of an absolute eternity was not enough for the light of nature to effect any substantial improvement in the social condition of mankind, we have no reason to suppose that a longer period would induce upon the order of things, a single useful and effectual innovation. But what ages of philosophy could not do, has been, to a great extent, already performed by the Christian doctrine. This will appear by the following considerations:—

1st. Christianity has improved the moral condition of mankind. This, unbelievers have seldom hesitated to admit—nor can it be denied with any

show of propriety or reason. For in a few centuries it completely abolished some of the most brutal and beastly practices which ever polluted the Heathen world. It turned the gladiators out of the amphitheatres, and left the Colliseum itself, to combat with the lapse of ages—a monument of architectural grandeur, and of refined barbarism. And it has expunged from the catalogue of human enormities, the beastly indulgences, and public indecencies and impurities of Pagan worship and superstition. We do not intend to labor this particular part of our subject, because it has often been done—but as morality constitutes an important item in whatever relates to the social interests of man, it should be among the first subjects of regard in the present instance. For it can not require proof that society is neither greatly improved, nor susceptible of material improvement without the intervention of sound moral principles. Let the strong want respect for the rights of the weak—let truth and chastity be disregarded—let theft and mere cunning be considered as accomplishments—and we care not who may controvert the position, such a state of society is evil, and can never be much improved but by a radical change in its morality.

But such was the state of morals—such the character and condition of the best human society at the introduction of Christianity. No effectual remedy could be found, to check or counteract the torrent of popular vice, among the various and nu-

merous attempts and expedients adopted with that view. Because, while the fountains of knowledge and the principles of action are both corrupt and corrupting, the endeavor to purify the streams of vice which flow through community, must be abortive. This was not attempted by the Gospel. It went to the fountain-head whence evil flowed, and there poured in the ingredients of healing. It taught men to regard each other as members of one great family—to restrain and control their bad passions; and it instructed them to cherish good principles as the only sure ground of good practices. And it sanctioned and enforced all this, by an authority from which there is no appeal—the approvings of conscience for good, and its disapprobation for evil intentions.

It is not assumed that these principles, this power and purpose of the Gospel, have been carried out to their proper results. And any proper attention to facts, will satisfy every dispassionate mind of the reason. It is, that Christianity has never yet been permitted to exert its own undoubted influences. At the moment of its introduction, it was corrupted, and as far as possible, neutralized by the Platonic philosophy, under its thousand modifications, as well as by the endless prejudices and superstitions of both Jews and Gentiles. And after struggling forward in defiance of these obstructions, for some three centuries, it was taken under the protection and management of the state, where it

has ever since remained in vassalage. It is but now just emerging from its thraldom, and developing its native powers. But in defiance of all these embarrassments, Christianity has, from the beginning, exerted a favorable influence upon the morals of its recipients; and that power is acquiring new resources from day to day. This will never be questioned by those who have compared the state of the Christian world at the Reformation, with the present time. We are now but beginning to witness and to feel the controlling moral power which appertains to the Gospel—and with it, that measure of social enjoyment which it is so eminently calculated to diffuse over mankind.

2d. Christianity has enlightened the intercourse, and refined and softened the manners and customs of its recipients. It has done this principally by enabling every one to understand and appreciate the rights of others—not moral rights, alone, but the social rights produced by their application. It has removed from society, to some extent, the overbearing assumption of one class, and the tame and degrading servility of another, by rendering human intercourse ostensibly reciprocal—an open field where a nominal equality attaches to all who enter.

It is very true that some ages of the Christian church, are not particularly distinguished for refinement. But there is little danger of mistaking the reasons of the fact. At all events, none will doubt that these were, of all others, the particular

periods in which Christianity exerted the least influence, since its first introduction into the world.

One of the great instruments of softening the affections, and improving the manners and customs of society, is the Christian Sunday. This day has been observed for the purposes of religious worship, since the apostolic age; and most of the time, as a day of rest from the ordinary business and labors of life. On this day, therefore, the moral requirements of the Gospel have been pointed out and enforced in the lectures and homilies delivered from the pulpit, and which have never failed to make impressions favorable to humanity and benevolence. Especially since the Reformation, a spirit of inquiry has been kept in constant progress, which has already effected the expulsion of many gross and illiberal opinions from the church, and which has shown that the principles and bearings of faith are necessarily and intimately connected with the social as well as moral condition of man. Those who would have been contented with the humblest of all religious attainments—its mere profession and forms—have been induced to enter upon repeated examinations of the nature and objects of the duties devolved upon them by the Christian doctrine. And the consequence has been, that the purest and loftiest sentiments, and the most affectionate and amiable manners, have distinguished in many instances, the inmates of the abodes of penury and grief.

Nothing built upon the factitious distinctions of society, can stand long before these influences. They must, and they will in due process of time, level all distinctions but those of talent and worth; for their tendency, though slow, is still certain to liberalize the mind, purify the affections, and enlighten and humanize the intercourse of mankind. Every step in this process, is marked by the influence of Sunday—a day which skeptics affect to regard as an idle or useless institution; and by the gross and indecent contempt of which, they unwittingly furnish the clearest evidence of the social state to which their own opinions directly tend.

We have stated that Christianity had exalted WOMAN, and placed her in a situation to discharge with more propriety and success, her high and responsible duties. And it is probably too late a day, to look for questions of doubt, respecting the social influences which she exerts over that part of the world where Christianity is professed. But if the skeptic wishes information on this subject, he may find it in the customs of the Orientals, and in the children of *nature* who have yet a place in our own land, in the disgusting slavery and degradation to which females are reduced. Or, if he considers these as inappropriate examples, he may review the pages of Roman history, and there learn that the sturdy *pater-familias* was accustomed to treat women as an inferior species of a common race, and to shut them out from the converse of his

enlightened friends—from all the usual means of mental and social improvement, and to subject them to ignorance, servility, and perhaps crime. Such they were, and such they were destined to remain, when Christianity poured its benign light upon this dark world, and put to shame "the ignorance of foolish men."

It is not pretended that the genius of Christianity has, in all instances, or perhaps in any, exerted its full might in raising woman from her degradation. But it has already, and long since, done that to which no other moral system ever made any pretensions. It has made her in all respects the companion of the "lords of creation," and introduced her as an equal, into the social circles from which she had been excluded from time immemorial. And it is now throwing over her mind the illuminations of science, calling her talents as well as her affections into requisition, and making her the cultivated instrument of training the young mind, and opening up the pathway of wisdom, and honor, and usefulness before us, in the bright morning of our days. She chastens the stern and rude aspect, and restrains the fierce and angry passions of man, and aids in humanizing and socializing his nature. But it should not be overlooked, that however great and interesting her influence in softening the manners of society, that influence is the result of the power of Christianity over her own character and destiny.

3d. Among the social benefits of Christianity, we must not overlook its *political influences*. The skeptic may smile, if he pleases; but he must employ far other means, in order to account for the bearings of Christianity upon the social compact. Whether this subject has received that attention which its importance demands, is a question which the present frame of the public mind may not admit of being dispassionately answered. The world certainly has not been in circumstances very favorable to correct ideas respecting it; and it is doubted whether, in our own country, the habits of thought and tone of feeling are such as to secure an unprejudiced decision. For in some parts, it is not long since religious duties were performed much as the same persons paid their debts—because the *laws* enforced compliance. So that probably the experiment has not been fairly and fully made, even among ourselves, of the native and unsophisticated political influences of Christianity.

Probably the best illustration of these influences, is to be found in the progress of Christianity during the first three centuries, when it forced itself forward into notice and general acceptation, in defiance of every obstacle. Not that the state of community was more favorable to its political developments, or by any means as much so, as at the present time; but the simplicity and greater purity of the Gospel, left it to the exercise of a proportionate might and energy over the views and feelings

of its subjects. And in reviewing these, we shall find much to admire in the power it exerted over particular persons, and ultimately upon national policy. We shall hear injunctions, and witness a course of conduct based upon them, of which the world furnishes no previous example; and we shall contemplate results as rapidly formed, as they are extraordinary in character. And all this, independent of any connection with, or favor from the constituted authorities.

The apostles had much more occasion to express themselves fully on this subject, than their Master. His labors were confined to Judea—but their's extended to nearly every part of the world then known. Besides, they were basely misrepresented as the enemies of the State. It was, therefore, necessary that they should speak out, and that the great body of Christians should distinctly understand their political duties. And while they were very explicit in their instructions, like their Master, they carefully and consistently followed their own teachings. This greatly assisted the primitive Christians to understand them; and lessens the danger of any mistakes respecting the subject at the present time.

Since the time of Constantine the Great, we have had little opportunity to test the political genius of the Gospel. That emperor identified Christianity, as far as possible, with the interests, honors, and emoluments of a corrupt government; and by

making it subservient to national policy, neutralized or annihilated its native influences. From that time to the present, it has been thought necessary in most countries, to make legal provision for the support of the Gospel, and in many instances, to reward its more distinguished ministers with splendid temporalities. But the evil did not terminate here—it left men to the most fatal misapprehensions respecting the whole sum of Christian influences, social and moral. And thus, while a majority supposed that it ought to be sustained by legal enactments, others thought it had no connection with, or influence upon the institutions of government. One man believed that it was a necessary concomitant of arbitrary power—another, that it was productive of a pusillanimous spirit, and of the doctrine of "passive obedience and non-resistance."

Now, whoever will be at the trouble to examine the subject, will discover that it is neither one nor the other of these things. It is not the necessary associate, nor even the friend of arbitrary power—neither does it cherish a tame and unmanly spirit, nor encourage a blind submission to the dictates of authority. And the conduct of the apostles furnishes the most decisive proof on this subject. Indeed, it is precisely that kind of proof which, of all others, is the most convincing and irresistible—the personal conduct of those concerned.

The apostles preached for the first time, and with great success, on the day of Pentecost, and on

several immediately succeeding days. Their great success, together with their public remarks respecting the crucifixion of their Master, gave umbrage to the authorities. Some of the principal speakers were apprehended and brought before the Sanhedrim, where they were reprimanded for accusing that council of the murder of Jesus, and were further charged to preach no more in his name. In their reply, we discover at once their position—and it should forever settle the question respecting their pusillanimity.—"Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; for we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Is this the language of a tame and broken spirit—of an unmanly acquiescence in the will of their rulers? On the other hand, does it betray an unbecoming disrespect for them? Neither—it is the plain but dignified language of men who have taken their ground, and who have deliberately counted the immense cost at which it must be maintained—who, with a manly ingenuousness, embrace the earliest occasion to apprise both their magistrates and the world, of their determination. This it was proper they should do, as they were acting upon a question involving immense interests—and this they did, as men of candor and integrity. And it wrung from their rulers the just tribute of admiration—"for when they saw the boldness of Peter

and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled."

These men welcomed all the consequences of their disobedience; for they submitted with unparallelled patience and fortitude, to every indignity and suffering that ingenuity could invent, or power inflict. In this they seem to act upon the principle, that the violation of a known law might be justly punished, even when it was understood that the law itself was arbitrary and oppressive. They evidently hoped, and with good reason, that peaceful endurance would in due time correct the evils under which they suffered, and give them liberty of conscience. And it produced these ends. But had not the influence of Christianity been favorable to the political well-being of mankind, these kindly results would never have been attained.

From these facts, it is shown that the Christian system is favorable to just views of the nature and purposes of civil government, and conducive to the social happiness of the human race. Because, while it allows every one the rights of conscience, it requires each and all to demean himself as a quiet and peaceable citizen. And that these things are intimately connected with the social condition of mankind, none will probably dispute. For nothing can be plainer than that the improvements made in the science of government, and the greater mildness of the laws, are so far approaches to a more refined and happier state of society. To

doubt this, would be to doubt whether mild and equitable laws are better than the most oppressive tyranny—whether peace and security are to be preferred to rapine and violence—whether social order and civilization are more desirable than barbarism.

The more Christianity is purified from the corruptions of the different systems of philosophy—from the superstitions of the dark ages—from the forms and incumbrances of mistaken zeal and scholastic ignorance—the more direct and obvious its influence becomes in securing the political, and, consequently, the social happiness of mankind. This is evident from the present condition of those nations which have received its truths, and live under its illumination. There is a wide and well marked difference between the social condition of Papists and Protestants. And in every Christian land, as the light of the Gospel is diffused, and its moral and social bearings understood, in that ratio are the people politically free and personally secure in the enjoyment of their inalienable rights.

The skeptic, if he chooses, may compare the political and social condition of the most refined nations at the introduction of Christianity, with that of most European States at the present time. And although Italy may have made no advances in the fine arts—though the triumphs and grandeur of its power, and the overwhelming might of its influence are no more—still its social and even political state

is improved. The barbarities that abounded in the days of Augustus, have become only matter of history; and the unchaste scenes of the feasts of Bacchus, and the unfeeling gladiatorial sports, have long ceased to constitute any part of public amusement.

Let this comparison be extended to Protestant Europe, where the reading of the Bible in the vernacular tongue is allowed, and the political condition of the people will be found to correspond with their advances in religious knowledge. The laws are milder, and the government is more paternal—crime is diminished, and the security of property and person is proportionably augmented. To all this we must add, that there is both more intelligence and more refinement among the mass of the people in Protestant countries, than in any other; and that the government is better administered. In proof of this, compare Britain with France, and Protestant Germany with Italy, Portugal, or Spain. And, finally, compare the United States with any or all of these, recollecting that we have no national religious establishment, but that Christianity is left to the exercise of its own might; and it will be seen that it is improving the moral character, the political condition, the social feelings, relations, refinement, and happiness of this whole people. A vast proportion of the degradation, ignorance, servility, and crime among us, is here by importation from abroad, and attaches to the foreigners who

have not yet identified themselves with the people, nor felt the mental and moral power of our institutions, nor amalgamated with the popular character. These facts are palpable and undeniable.

The skeptic will probably endeavor to show that it is owing to other than Christian influences, that so great disparity exists in the social and political condition of mankind. Other causes have no doubt exerted more or less influence in this matter—nor does the admission affect the truth of our position. It will still remain for him to account for the remarkable fact, that the superior intelligence, and better government, and greater freedom and social happiness of the people, all occur, and only occur, where Christianity is best understood and appreciated. He must put his finger on the map of the world, and show on his own principles, if he can, why the boundaries of rational views of the social compact, of sound science and civilization, are also the limits of the present influences of Christianity! He can not suppose—he has no right to suppose, that all this is the result of accident. For all, or nearly all the facts on which he relies, exist in other countries, and where very few of these high social and political privileges have ever been enjoyed. It is fair to presume that like causes produce like effects; and that where given effects are not produced, it is for want of appropriate causes. And as certain results are visible within the sphere of the influence of Christianity, which do not exist,

and never have existed elsewhere, the inference is both just and necessary, that Christianity is the efficient cause of this difference in the condition of mankind. This is the ground on which we rest the superior progress of Christian countries in moral virtue and social refinement. And from this ground, no power of sophistry or evasion—and nothing else can be urged against it—can ever effect our removal. It is the very ground on which the intelligent skeptic affects to stand—the ground of facts, of experience, and of reason.

But it is now time to meet the inquiry, what has all this to do with the evidence of a divine revelation? For admitting the fact that Christianity has improved the social institutions of mankind, what has this to do with its derivation? Other things, plainly not of superhuman origin, have borne their part in the melioration of the condition of the human race, and why may not this, without supposing a divine interposition?

The same answer meets all these inquiries—Christianity itself could not have existed without a revelation. And, consequently, whatever it has effected, is the result of its derivation. It has done what nothing else could do—a fact which has been abundantly proved in the preceding remarks.—What other system has sensibly improved the morals of mankind? What, save Christianity, ever had the least tendency to exalt woman from her state of slavery and ignorance, and to fit her for the

proper discharge of the high and responsible duties of the station in which she seems placed by Providence? What else has ever reached forth a hand that touched the institutions of government with the spirit of tolerance and benignity, and which rendered the laws efficient by mental and moral influences? That Christianity has done these things, is evidence of its divine original—inasmuch as no mere human institution ever approximated to, or conceived their attainment.

It is notorious that well-informed unbelievers have generally admitted the superior moral and social influences of Christianity. If, then, they would avoid the further admission at once, of the inspiration of the founder of Christianity, they must admit his intellectual superiority to all other founders of systems. They must go farther, and also graduate their views of his pre-eminence by the superiority of the system published by him, in its influences and effects upon mankind. And are they prepared to do this? Can they stand up and out to public view, and avow their honest conviction that the obscure Israelite embodied a better system—better in its morality, its social bearings, its political influences—than ever entered the minds of the sages of Heathen wisdom? How can they do this, after having used and exhausted nearly every term of contempt and reproach upon that very system and its spotless author!—after having so long lauded to the skies the wisdom and worth of a few

Gentile philosophers, and their ethical systems! If they are really entitled to the pre-eminent distinction, so vehemently claimed for them, in what does it consist? Certainly, if skeptics know, they can tell us. But this they have never done. Do they, then, seriously believe it? If not, why do they persist in its assertion? And if they do, how can they admit with so much complacency, the superiority of the Master of Christians?

But we are unwilling that the skeptic should avail himself of the mere admission that Jesus was superior to any Pagan philosopher, and that Christianity is simply a better system of ethics, than any of antiquity. This is but a compromise, a yielding up of his asperities, with a view to retain his principles. He well knows that the founder of the Christian system claimed divine authority for his mission, and the great principles which he inculcated. And every man knows that he has denied that authority, ridiculed its pretensions, and assaulted the Master of Christians with the appellation of impostor. To this ground he ought strictly to keep, or to admit the divinity of the mission of Christ, and that his doctrines were imparted by divine revelation.

This being the true position of the skeptic, in order to enable him to test the tenure by which he holds it, and the security which it affords him, we present him the following considerations. If, as he thinks, the wisest, and certainly the most polished

nations, did not make the highest advances in social and moral science, how can he account for the fact, that these very improvements were devised by an obscure and unlettered Hebrew? Does ignorance or prejudice ever argue deliberately, or look forward through successive ages, and anticipate correctly the operation of incipient causes? No man will pretend this. And yet it is certain that Jesus and his apostles foresaw the working of the system which they supported and established, and anticipated its results. These, as far as the present subject is concerned, are the higher and better moral and social condition of mankind. And that the Christian system has produced these results, the most distinguished infidels have always admitted.

Was it accident, then, that suggested the system, that fixed its adaptations, that argued from cause to to consequence, that produced the results? Certainly not; for in that case, the latter, at least, could not have been foreseen. And if not accidental, is it consistent with the acknowledged imperfection of human wisdom, to suppose that any man, however wise or learned, should, by the mere force of intellect, be able to judge with precision, of the influence of his opinions some two thousand years in advance? None will pretend that this is possible. But Jesus and his apostles did this—and the record of the fact is in our hands! Consequently, if all this is impossible from accident, or from mere

human foresight, it can only result from *actual inspiration*.

For authority on the several subjects treated of in this article, the reader is referred to the Minute Philosopher, (by Bishop Berkely,) Dial. v. Sec. 28, p. 128, and Dial. v. Sec. 25,—Godwin against Atheism, Lect. vi, pp. 300–304—and Guizot's History of Civilization, Lect. ii, pp. 41–43, and Lect. vi, pp. 146–149. These are a few of many undoubted—and it is believed undisputed authorities which might be adduced.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSISTENCY OF REVELATION.

One of the principal objections to a divine revelation, is, that it was not necessary, and, therefore, that it is neither consistent nor reasonable to suppose that such revelation was ever made to mankind. In view of this position, it might be asked, whether the moral and social improvements in the condition of the world, were in any respect necessary? These were shown in the preceding chapter, to be the result, in a great degree, of the operation and influence of revelation. And if these results were necessary to the well-being of mankind, then the means requisite to their production, were equally necessary. These means are comprised in the system of revelation—and as far as can be ascertained from existing and palpable facts, they are the only means either adequate or adapted to that end.

But there are other considerations, which should be taken into the account, and which go far to prove that it was both consistent and reasonable that a revelation should be made.

None will doubt that it is both consistent and reasonable for parents to watch over the social and moral habits of their children; and to give them, from time to time, such general instructions, and to point out such rules of conduct, as their superior wisdom and experience have proved to be proper. To such instructions, it is also consistent that there should be added a distinct reference to results. No parent can excuse himself for omitting to point out the consequences of principles and actions, in his endeavors to improve the character of his child. Many of these would, of course, be such as the child, while a mere child, could neither have anticipated, nor argued, nor understood without such instructions. Being, to a great extent, the creature of wants, and appetites, and passions, he does, and he will, unless duly and faithfully taught, indulge every propensity and gratify every wish without restraint. It is only by being instructed, and that right early, that he fully learns and understands the injury, folly and criminality of unlicensed indulgence. No mere child ever understood, till taught, that the unrestrained gratification of his appetites would ruin his health, and bring him to an untimely grave; or that the full indulgence of his passions would destroy his own peace of mind, render him dangerous to the public safety and welfare, and bring down upon his head a train of unmitigated chastisements.

And who does not know, that the immense distance between savage and civilized man, is princi-

pally owing to the difference in the kind and character of early parental instruction? The former is the child of nature—revelling in all the latitude of untutored passions and unrestrained desires—the latter, influenced by a mental and moral power derived from instruction, appreciates the character and estimates the consequences of his actions. The former despises the taste, the tameness, and the restraints of civilized life—the latter pities the ignorance, and abhors the licentiousness of the barbarian. And we may very safely leave it to every well informed mind, to determine which is in the right.

We have only to apply the foregoing remarks to the position in which man is placed, and we shall perceive that he is a child who needs to be instructed in the nature of the principles by which he should be actuated, in the relations which he is bound to sustain and honor, and in the duties which he is to perform. In all these respects, it is just as reasonable and necessary that he should receive superhuman aid, as that children should be schooled and counselled by their parents.

Such a revelation, none will doubt, could be made—and it is fair to presume, that it would be made if the Deity can be supposed to take any interest in the moral and intellectual condition of his children. That he does take an interest in their physical condition, is beyond all question. We have but to open our eyes—to witness the adjustment of the human constitution to the world around

us, to be satisfied that there was a beneficent care exerted over, and in favor of the human race.*

Let it be remembered, that man attaches vastly more consequence to his mind and moral nature, than to his body. In all reason, then, the Deity should take better care of the intellectual than of the physical man, and make higher and better provisions for his social wants and improvement, than for the accommodation of his senses. When we see him expend so much upon the frail and perishable casket, can we infer that he takes no interest in, attaches no value to, the inestimable jewel it contains? This is not to be supposed. Nor do unbelievers argue on any other subject in this manner. Where religion is not concerned, they would unhesitatingly admit both our premises and conclusions—and they must do so here, to preserve their character for candor and consistency. For there is the same actual difference between men under the light of the Old and New Testament revelation, and the rest of the world, as between well-taught children of modern cultivated society, and the untutored offspring of the most ignorant. And for the same reason. The *light of nature* is no more effectual in the advancement of men in moral science, than in the production of knowledge and virtue in children. As a parent, then, who would secure the knowledge and virtue, and consequently the highest happiness of his children at

* Chalmers on Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man—Bridgewater Treatises.

all times, it is both consistent and reasonable that God should give a revelation to mankind.

It has been suggested, that the question would arise in this place—why, if a revelation was reasonable and necessary, it was not sooner made, and so made as immediately to benefit the whole human race?

It is a sufficient answer, to observe, that were the views of unbelievers granted, the same questions, with some little change of phraseology, would remain to be answered by them. Thus, it would devolve on them to show, why the oldest nations—Hindoos, Chinese, Persians and others, are yet in the infancy of science and civilization; why the social and moral institutions of modern Europe and the United States, have not been coeval with human society, and why they are not universal. The volume of *nature* has been alike open to all, as effectually as that of *revelation* to a part. And yet we witness in both, but partial results.

The question is, therefore, quite as easily and as readily answered by the Christian as the skeptic, with this great difference in favor of the former—he sees, in the working of the great plan of divine government a useful and benevolent issue; while, if there were no such intelligent providence, there can be no relief—not even the prospective mitigation of present and apparent evils.

There is in the moral government of the Deity abundant evidence of the same general system of *progression*, which is observed in his physical pro-

vidence. It is in this way, that he effects the gradual developement of his moral purposes in respect to mankind, which are only ripened and matured in their results. And having furnished us (in the Scriptures) with several illustrious examples, we can not doubt of his having chosen the proper time and place for making a revelation, and of his employing the precise number best calculated to render that revelation most beneficial to mankind.—Among these examples, we may notice the circumstances relative to the death of Christ. What would unbelievers now say, had the whole nation of Jews believed in him? Most certainly—that they had agreed in a body to impose on mankind! And by what means could it have been known that they had not done so? From this single instance, it will be seen, that if the reasons under consideration, urged by the skeptic against revelation had been averted by the instantaneous conversion of all the Jews of that age, to Christianity—instead of securing his belief, it would only have furnished him with another, and much more valid objection. So that among the obvious and prominent reasons why a revelation was not sooner made, and made to all men, we may reckon this—that it was made just at the time and as it was, for this among other purposes, to effectually silence the cavils of unbelievers and secure their conversion to the knowledge and obedience of the truth.

Has the unbeliever ever been able to assign as good and sufficient reasons for the rejection of a

divine revelation? Taking the moral and intellectual character of man into consideration, has he—can he ever assign, one respectable reason, why God should not take as much and as good care of the human mind, as of the body? He can not say that it is impossible, or absolutely improbable—he can not say that it is incompatible with the resources and ability of the Deity, or inconsistent with the situation and wants of man. All that he can pretend, is, that such a revelation is contrary to the established order of things. But does he know what this established order is? Is he prepared to say, that he knows what provisions were made for the production of certain events, in the infancy of time, and when the new-born earth was placed in its destined orbit? We greatly mistake, if well-informed unbelievers will not preserve some little modesty in these matters, and admit, that they in this instance, argue from observed phenomena, rather than from any knowledge of the original plan, or the original laws by which the physical world is governed.

But if the unbeliever will not make this admission, it would be gratifying to know how he would dispose of a vast number of facts which have been incontrovertibly established by geology. There the developement of successive processes, is visible and tangible—some of which, at least, are in many respects contrary to the present established order of things. These we will notice in another place. But it will become him to consider the subject now

in hand, if he is disposed to assert his knowledge of the original principles on which the machinery of our world performs its operations. In the meantime, it is to be kept in mind, that it has been shown to be both reasonable and consistent that a revelation should be made. It can not, therefore, be equally consistent, that such revelation should not be given. To this the unbeliever ought not to object—since the conclusions follow from principles which he admits.

All the bearings and influences of the Jewish and Christian revelation, are reasonable and consistent.

That man is a religious being, is universally admitted—except that the infidel would substitute the word *superstitious*, for religious. But as we have shown how the world happened to be superstitious in the *proper* sense of the term—and where superstition exerted its darkest and deadliest power, if he still chooses to use it, we have no great objection after this explanation. We have all along supposed that he agreed with us in maintaining, that it was very desirable to have all these gross superstitions removed. And we can not doubt that he will also agree with us, that whatever means reach the case, and expel the demon, are so far reasonable in their operation. Now the doctrines of divine revelation, have been shown to be effectual in removing superstition. And this has been fully sustained by facts. Where are there the fewest superstitions? Who are the most free from superstitious influences? It is impossible to mistake the answer—where Christianity is best understood, and by those

most enlightened and controlled by its power. So far, then, revelation exerts a consistent and reasonable influence in its application to mankind.

We are aware that the need of *moral* instruction is denied by unbelievers, who contend that the *light of nature* is sufficient for all moral purposes. But they merely assert this. We repeat—they have never yet furnished a plausible argument for its truth, nor the shadow of evidence in its support. Nor can they ever do either—for the plainest of all possible reasons; and that is, because *all* the evidence which has any relation to the subject is on the side of the needed influence of a revelation.

If the skeptic is disposed to call this in question, he is again referred to the moral condition of the whole Heathen world, at the introduction of Christianity. And he is to contemplate it—not in the light of the philosophy of Socrates, or Plato, or Seneca, but as it was in fact—a mass of corruption, violence and degradation. Books, like power and cultivation, were then the possession of the *few*, and they related generally to the condition and interests of that few, to the exclusion of the many. The great multitude were deemed of too little importance to be named or regarded, except as the instruments of the caprice, the policy, or the pleasure of those by whom they were controlled. Hence, he who infers the morals of the world, from the ethical systems of philosophy of those times, will find that he has drawn conclusions without premises—and is

self-deceived, perhaps the involuntary instrument of deceiving others.

But we may be told of an occasional instance of sterling integrity, of inflexible justice, of unimpeachable veracity, of amiable modesty and humility. Very well. And what does all this prove? In what individual were all these, and some other indispensable moral qualities, concentrated? It would take the united worth of half a dozen of the best Heathens of which antiquity can boast, to constitute the moral character of any one of the millions of sincere and enlightened Christians! No well informed infidel believes, that the moral health of the world was as sound and good two thousand years since, as at the present time. Nor does he believe, that his property, his liberty, or his life is in any where else as safe as in Christian lands.—Bluster as he may, about the sufficiency of the light of nature, or pout if he pleases, at the moral influences of revelation; still, he knows that it is to that very revelation, that the world is indebted for all its advances in moral science. And for the same reason he also knows, that the moral instructions of revelation have had a useful and reasonable influence over the moral circumstances of man.—These instructions have greatly improved his moral knowledge, enlarged his views of the nature and extent of his obligations, inspired sound and correct principles, and promoted their practice. Such a revelation is therefore reasonable in its ap-

plication to the moral state, and consistent in its influence over the moral conduct of mankind.

But man must die. To say nothing of the theory that he has entailed mortality upon himself and his race by sin—it is certain that, with his present constitution, he is doomed to death. Nor is he unthinking on this subject. Man differs in nothing from the creatures around him more widely and visibly, than in his sensibility to the loss of his species by death, and in his anticipations of its certainty for himself. If, then, there are any means compatible with truth and propriety, by which he can be comforted in his sorrows, and sustained in his approach to the grave, it is both consistent and reasonable that they should be made known. This divine revelation has done—and nothing but such a revelation ever did, or ever can, exert any useful or salutary influence in these matters over the human mind.

The skeptic would have us believe, that any attempts to impart this comfort and support, are sheer impostures—and that the pretension that there is any to be obtained, is altogether illusory and unfounded. And all this—while *he himself* is ransacking every corner of the universe, except the Bible, to gather the materials wherewith to combat his fate! This is the grand secret of all his parade about philosophy—the basis of his pompous pretensions that nothing but philosophy can either fit man to support his sorrows with becoming patience, or to live and die with befitting dignity.

But the unbeliever forgets, that were his position granted, it would be useless—worse than useless to mankind. For men never were, nor are ever likely to become philosophers in his sense of the term. And then, what was the great support that mere philosophers derived from their theories? It was rather apathy, than hope—a forced, a sullen, an unnatural acquiescence in a decree of fate, rather than a chastened submission to the operation of an intelligent and benevolent system. In this manner, a few ancients and moderns have passed the ordeal of mourning in gloomy reserve—and in moody silence or affected levity, gone down to the tomb.

With these facts before us, it is not to be denied that the skeptic tacitly admits, that the human mind is so constituted as to require something with which it can be satisfied, and on which it can rest in view of death. And this something, whatever it is, must comprise either absolute annihilation, or future existence. One or the other of these, is the utmost that the human mind can imagine, as the result of its present existence. But the philosophical systems never did, and never could secure the faith and confidence of mankind. They left men at the moment of trial—as the grave was about to close over them—to all the wretchedness of uncertainty, to all the horrors of despair. And it will not be pretended, that men ever were or can be satisfied, with being forced from existence into utter nothingness. At this point, revelation meets us—not with the poor and baseless conjectures, the ill-

constructed and pitiful attempts at argument which mark the highest and the best philosophical system; but with sober facts and demonstrative proof of the resurrection. The reason of *philosophers* was at once satisfied of the consistency of revelation, in its bearings upon the mortality of man.—They embraced it, preached it, rejoiced in it, and died for it!

No fact is better established, than that the followers of Plato, were among the early converts to Christianity; and that they were eminently distinguished for their labors and sufferings in its promotion. These are the men, whose writings in the various forms of Apologies, Vindications, Expositions, diffused far and wide, the knowledge and the belief of the Christian religion. And when such men as Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, and many others—in the best days of ancient science and philosophy, when to profess Christianity was to invoke the utmost rigor of the laws, and to bring down the most dreadful tortures—could voluntarily renounce Gentilism, and devote their lives to the defence of divine revelation, what must be the inference? Most assuredly—that they esteemed it consistent and reasonable, as well as true. And they found it so under every trial, and have left the record of its triumphant power in comforting and sustaining them in death. And are we to suppose, that these men were less capable, or less disposed to reason on the subject of the comparative claims of philosophy and revelation

to reason and consistency, than the puny and obstreperous advocates of modern infidelity? It were an affront to the understanding of any man, to suppose this. Nor have we any reason to doubt, that were the laws as sanguinary and inflexible against infidelity, as they formerly were against Christianity—that every soul of the phalanx of skepticism would abandon their pretences to superior wisdom, and skulk behind any profession that would yield protection to their carcases!

We fearlessly leave it then, to the good sense—the common sense of all men—of unbelievers themselves, whether, with the aspirations of the soul after a resting place from the pains and sorrows of mortality, the Christian hope is not both reasonable and consistent? Revelation alone, permits its believers to feel and act like men—to live and die in the full exercise of all their sympathies and affections. The philosophy of infidels would turn man's heart to stone—like stoicism, render him insensible to sorrow or joy—and bring him down to the grave, "as the ox goeth to the slaughter." Christianity allows his tears, but wipes them away forever—and lays him down in death, pillowed on the hope of immortality.

Revelation is reasonable in its requirements, and consistent with itself.

It is reasonable that the devotional feelings should be directed towards a suitable and worthy object. The God of the Bible is the only worthy object of devotion, ever pointed out for the rational and de-

vout homage of the human mind. And we are required to worship him with gratitude, humility, reverence and affection—in one word, as children. This is a reasonable service; such as the world never performed, and never recognized without the aid of revelation.

It is reasonable, that moral obligations should be felt and appreciated, and all the moral duties strictly performed. Personal and social happiness are deeply involved in the just apprehension and observation of these duties. Revelation, and that alone, specifically enumerates and enjoins these duties—points out their necessity, their objects, their results—explains the grounds of their application, the consequences of their neglect, and enforces all this by considerations, which every mind feels to be just, proper, consistent and reasonable. It goes into all the relations sustained among men—among rulers and subjects, masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children, and adapts and modifies its requisitions to the peculiar situation of each, and of all. Its rules are comparatively few, and they are simple and intelligible. What can be more consistent or reasonable? Infidelity itself can not object—nay, it has long since admitted the propriety of the moral requirements of divine revelation.

But revelation requires us to believe in *miracles!* And this, we are told, is neither reasonable nor consistent. How the spirit of skepticism rallies at this point, and once more assumes the attitude of de-

fence. Strange as it may seem to the unbeliever, we do not consider a miracle as an absurdity. And if any thing can be more surprising than this in his view, we admonish him that it is about to be uttered. We do not believe that *he, himself*, with all his pretensions, thinks it absurd or inconsistent that miracles should be wrought! For he, as well as ourselves, are accustomed to contemplate several subjects equally miraculous as the resurrection of the dead, without the slightest suspicion that they were inconsistent or unreasonable. This, we now proceed to *demonstrate*, by a single instance out of many.

It is notorious that *man* is—and equally so, that he began to be. This is not only asserted by revelation, as well as presumable from the nature of the subject—but it is *demonstrated* by the facts of science; facts which infidelity dare not call in question, and the force of which, unbelievers can not evade. All geologists agree, that there is abundant proof, that there was a time when none of the superior animals could, or did exist on this globe.—They go further, and also agree, that there are certain evidences, of the existence of several—not to say many, of the superior grades anterior to the existence of man. Skeptical geologists are therefore convicted by their own showing—and the evidence they produce is, and ought to be, proof to the whole fraternity of unbelievers, of the utter fallacy of their occasional pretence that man always existed. They have done good service in assisting to

prove by tangible facts, that, when they make such an assertion, they do not themselves believe it, or may be convicted of their mistake by testimony which *they dare not impeach, and can not deny.**

* While this article was in progress, the author received by the politeness of the translator, R. W. Haskins, Esq., of Buffalo, N. Y., a copy of "*Considerations upon the nature of the vegetables that have covered the surface of the earth, at different epochs of its formation*; read before the Academy of Sciences of Paris, on the 11th of September, 1837, by MONS. ADOLPHE BRONGNIART." In consideration of the courtesy which gave us access to that interesting article, we quote the following passages from its pages, as directly in point—premising, that we merely *suppose*, that it was published in the American Journal of Science, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2, as it came regularly paged—without title or date.

"It (geology) discloses to us, in short, that all these phenomena, which have necessarily required so many centuries for their accomplishment, were *prior in point of time to the creation of man.*" Pages 316, 317.

Again—"Indeed, at that epoch when life first began to be manifested upon our globe, *the animals were all confined to the interior of the waters*, and even these presented but diminished specimens of their kinds; while a powerful vegetation, forming vast forests, covered at that early period, all such parts of the earth as were not submerged by the sea.....and of which the remains of successive growths, heaped one upon another, have (been) found our layers of coal, so deep, extensive and numerous; and in this form the remains of these primeval forests which have *preceded by so many centuries, the existence of man,*" etc. Page 318.

Also—"In the animal kingdom; the creation of mammifers, a class which all naturalists concur in placing at the summit of the animal scale, *and by which nature seems to have preluded the creation of man,*" etc. Page 326.

Had we asked for proof of our general position, we could not have desired more full, clear and decisive, than is furnished by this interesting tract; for which the translator will please accept our thanks.

This matter being settled, another fact is to be accounted for—how man came to be. Was it by a miracle, or not? Was it the suspension or violation of some pre-existing law? It is perfectly indifferent to the answers now necessarily to be given, and to the nature and character of the facts themselves, whether the infidel says that men were produced like *fungi* from the bosom of a prolific and genial earth, or were created by the fiat of the Almighty. In either case, the fact that they do exist is a miracle—and either case is equally miraculous. Because, it supposes a suspension or a violation of the previous laws of the physical world. And that constitutes a miracle—the precise kind of miracle to which the skeptic objects, which is so very offensive to all unbelievers; and which, after all, they are compelled to admit, and do admit to be necessary in order to account for human existence.

Thus the infidel with all his fastidiousness about miracles, has been convicted of believing in one—in order to convince himself that he exists. He must now submit to believe another—after which, we could hope he would cheerfully admit his belief in the resurrection, without considering it so very absurd and unreasonable. The reproduction of our species, and the consequent perpetuation of the human race, depend on principles that neither had, nor can have any place in our conceptions of the origin of human existence. This the unbeliever must admit—and admit to be equally certain and

obvious, in whatever way man was at first produced. Here then is another miracle—a miracle, which the infidel believes to have been actually wrought! And more than all this—it is one which, if he has ever had any definite notions respecting it, he has always believed! It is one, that during his whole life, it has never occurred to him, was either absurd or inconsistent. But he can not turn his attention for a moment to the subject, without perceiving that the perpetuation of our race depends on a change of the previous order of things—and that change is a miracle.

Now if the light of nature, *enlightened* by science, compels men to believe in miracles, is there anything so very absurd in the requirements of revelation? The identical argument of the unbeliever against revelation, lies with precisely the same force against his own opinions. But he can not abandon his convictions that he exists, merely because that existence involves a miracle—and to be consistent, he ought to receive and acknowledge a revelation, because it asks nothing of him, that he has not already conceded to the physical world, nor taxes his credulity beyond the measure which he has yielded to nature. If the operation of the laws of nature then, have admitted of the production of beings that did not previously exist, and this can not be disputed—then the existence of miracles is both consistent and reasonable. And this has been proved. The requirements of revelation by which we are bound to believe in miracles, are con-

sequently reasonable and consistent; and therefore such revelation is consistent with itself.

By this time, it is presumed that the uses and bearings of geology, when applied to the illustration and proof of subjects in controversy between infidels and believers in revelation, are better understood. And we are greatly mistaken, if the unbeliever does not find in that science, innumerable evidences of modifications of existence—of periods of the cessation of one form of being, and the introduction of new and entirely different species, which he can never reconcile with his favorite position—that nature's laws are uniform and eternal. And finding this, it is not impossible that he may come to the conclusion, that he was hasty in seizing upon this interesting science for the purpose of exploding the belief of a divine revelation. He may fix the dates of the various epochs which mark the mighty revolutions of the surface of this globe—the periods that attest the erasure of one species from the page of existence, and the insertion of another form of being—but at every step of the process, he will find new and multiplied correspondences between the facts developed, and the declarations of the Bible—new and accumulated reasons for the truth and consistency of divine revelation. We say to him, then—dig deep, make every coal-deposite and every rock unfold its mysteries, that the history of all time may be fully disclosed. For since he has appealed to geology, let him be tried by its testimony. But we admonish him to abide

its decisions. It has already convicted him of believing in miracles—and if he will not now admit those of revelation, it is time that he should cease to charge those with absurdity and want of sense who believe the Bible.

CHAPTER VII.

USELESSNESS OF INFIDELITY.

We have now completed the course originally contemplated, on the subject of infidelity. It was not intended to exhaust the treasures of evidence in favor of a divine revelation, or to say in our own way, what had been repeated over and over again, in vindication of Christianity. We have however often found, that we were treading in paths already opened, and reaping in fields long since cultivated by the advocates of the Bible. It remains to notice the character of the motives of unbelievers, and the effects of infidelity upon the human mind and human happiness.

It is conceded on all hands, that men never act without an object, a motive—and that philosophers at least, pursue an end both suitable and reasonable. Whatever that end, object, or motive may be, and by whomsoever pursued—whether it is explained to the world, or not—it is always understood to be worthy of those engaged in its attainment. And this is probably as true, and applies as forcibly to the motives of unbelievers, as of any other class of mankind! For it is the perception of the general objects which any person aims to accomplish, that

determines his character; and he is, and ought to be considered as a worthy or unworthy member of society, according as his motives are of useful or useless, good or evil tendency.

But we are not to suppose, that because man is a thinking, rational being, therefore all his motives, or his labors for their consummation, are necessarily *reasonable*. The mind may have been warped by some prejudice, or perverted by some favorite theory, or its regular operations broken up by the shock it has sustained in grappling with some all-engrossing subject. But still it is *mind*—though it may chance to be the mind of an infidel, an anchorite, or a lunatic. Hence, as the influence of any of these predominate, both the motives and their attainment, will be evil, useless, unreasonable.

What then are the obvious motives of unbelievers? What the tendency of their efforts to win men to infidelity?

These questions would find a ready and intelligent answer, should the reader discover a number of persons employed in undermining and pulling down his old family mansion, under pretence that it was built upon the sand—and that it was better to have no shelter, than one of which none knew the value save its occupants! There would be no difficulty in perceiving that the motives of those so employed, however sincerely they might be felt, were impertinent and improper in the last degree; and the pretence that they were the suggestions of sound philosophy, would be treated as the offspring

of folly or madness, with contempt or abhorrence. For it would be seen that the tendency of such efforts, could they but succeed, would be to fill the world with hordes of homeless and houseless vagabonds—exposed to every form of misery, and enduring every degree of suffering.

Such is the object of infidelity—such the employment of unbelievers! They are eternally complaining of the plan, the system, the influences of revelation. They are constantly devising means—and laboring with commendable industry, were it better employed, to undermine the confidence of the Christian, and force him into the labyrinth of skepticism. And for what purpose? Why, forsooth, that he may become a philosopher! That he may have no faith, no source of comfort in his sorrows, no sustaining hopes, no fixed principles, no religion! Charity itself can grant them nothing more favorable than this—nothing less can result from their endeavors. For they assume the motive of making men reasonable and philosophical. But we have not now to learn, that all this implies, in the vocabulary of infidelity, neither more nor less than the design to expunge the Bible from the catalogue of veritable books, and to blot out from the mind of man, all faith, hope and confidence in divine revelation.

Could they succeed—do they propose to improve the morals of mankind?

It is impossible to believe that infidels think that morality is of no consequence. All their distin-

guished writers have felt compelled to say something respecting human virtue. It is very true, they have not always coincided in their views of the principles on which they supposed it to be founded. But still, it has led them to admit its necessity. And, indeed, this was unavoidable, since no human society can subsist without the observation of some moral rules. Do they then propose an improved morality?—better than is taught in the Bible—better than has been learned from revelation—better than all Christendom acknowledges, and which all Christians desire to see carried out to its utmost results, in the perfection of individual and public virtue—the consummation of right principles, in the production of good practices? No; they have never made any pretences to this—they have not so much as assumed that this was any part of the great purposes to be answered by their efforts against revealed religion. They have not uttered a word, which intimates the thought of improving upon the system of Christian morality. Nor have they any reason to suppose that their principles are in any manner calculated to advance the practice of virtue. If, then, the practice of virtue be not rendered more certain, no moral benefit can follow from infidelity. And the most that can be allowed to its claims—the most that can be claimed for it is, that—it is utterly *useless!* The world, then, is called to witness, and to admire the disinterested labors of infidels in the promotion of principles, which in relation to morals, is of no pos-

sible use to mankind! There may be something out of common-place in these efforts—but they are rendered in vain.

But this is not all—the whole scheme of infidelity, so far as morals are involved, is worse than useless. Doubtless many unbelievers are respectable for their morality. But we challenge an instance in which one of their number who was ever a Christian, preserves the same decorum of speech and behavior, or cherishes the same high sense of moral obligation, as when a believer in divine revelation. In the face of tangible facts—of living illustrations—they will not deny that it is too common for their converts to evince a lower tone of moral sentiment. And in more ways than one, but especially in the utterance of blasphemous epithets, the impurity of principles is betrayed by impure language—the mutual evidence of corrupted feelings, and of growing and ill-suppressed depravity. The reader need not be taken to revolutionary France—to the consideration of the awful and tremendous outbreakings of a nation of atheists; he can contemplate the minor workings of the same machinery, divested of its political impulsion—nearer home. Every thing said or done for the support and promotion of infidelity—every influence it exerts over the moral feelings, is, at best, of no use to virtue; or tends to weaken its power over mankind. What a comment upon the principles, the talents, the exertions of unbelievers! What a splendid illustration of the fitness and con-

sistency of the claims which they have so vehemently urged, to exclusive reason and philosophy! What conclusive evidence, that the world is bound to consider them the most disinterested and greatest benefactors of the human race, because they would absolve men from the best bonds of social order, and the highest obligations of moral duty!

Do unbelievers propose to augment the happiness of mankind?

Human happiness is the result of a combination of physical comforts and mental influences—in other words, of the condition of the body and the disposition of the mind. Now it is not to be supposed, that infidelity assumes that it can particularly improve the physical circumstances of man. It neither builds houses for his accommodation, nor provides the bread which he must eat, nor yet the garments which he must wear. It neither ennobles man's nature, or makes him more honorable, or renders places of trust, power and emolument more accessible; nor does it multiply the means of human support and comfort, or distribute them more widely or with greater impartiality. Most of these things depend much more upon personal industry, enterprise, prudence and the force of talent, than upon individual opinions.

But the quiet and peaceable possession and enjoyment of the external comforts within our reach, depend very much upon the nature of prevailing principles. There must be a reciprocal respect for the rights and possessions of others, a sacred and

inviolable regard for their safety—or individual welfare, and public tranquillity are phrases without any just application. We have seen that infidelity neither does nor can pretend to improve upon Christian influences, in these particulars. And that as these blessings of the social state, were not as fully and as uniformly enjoyed before the diffusion of the doctrines of the Bible, as at present, and do not now exist to any desirable extent, where Christianity does not prevail, there is abundant reason to believe that instead of bettering the physical condition of mankind, infidelity would diminish the amount, by removing or destroying some of the means of human happiness. Of what possible use can that system be to our physical existence, which neither adds to the number of our comforts, nor protects us with any certainty, in the enjoyment of the few we may possess? And how impudent the claims which it sets up to consideration and adoption, when its most indulgent construction proves, that it is not merely useless, but palpably injurious, by weakening the motives of respect for the personal rights of our fellow-men!

As an instance of the domestic and social influences of infidelity, take the undisguised avowals of some of its advocates—that marriage ought not to be considered in any other light than a civil contract, and binding only so long as deemed agreeable or convenient to the parties. We would not be understood that this is the opinion of a majority of unbelievers—but it is the deliberate assertion of some

who hold a high place in their ranks, who have given tone and impulse to their fraternity in this country, and whose views can not fail to exert vast influence in their communities. Nor have we any reason to suppose that this monstrous construction of one of the primitive laws of our nature, is the growth of momentary extravagance—a mere freak of perverted imagination. It is the natural fruit of a system which has been long maturing—its germ is the sentiment that adultery would be allowable, if it was more fashionable! Whoever can smile upon this maxim, has only to follow it to its results, and so absolve the parties from all obligations to each other!

Is this the sober moral regard for personal rights, the social compact, the happiness of mankind, promised by infidelity? Leaving the parties out of the question, morality and public happiness are concerned in the condition of children. Are they to become public property?—to be claimed by their nominal parents? or are they to roam over the world in search of that guardianship and protection which infidelity has denied them? How and by whom are they to be provided for? By what means and in what manner are they to be properly educated? Are they ever to know and to feel the endearments of home?—and if so, what is to be the character of that home? Is it one in which a pure-hearted and enlightened mother presides, in which she diffuses her own genius and affections—or where these have been steeped in passion, and sac-

rificed at the shrine of infidelity—to her bed, her nature, her God?

And this is one of the many lessons of the *usefulness* of infidelity—of its superior claims to the consideration of enlightened men! This is an integral part of a system which claims to be indispensable to the intellectual renovation of mankind! This is one of the phases of that grand scheme of philosophy, philanthropy and truth, only effectual in promoting and establishing the true dignity of human nature! It is well that it makes few pretences to the promotion or security of human happiness. For if these principles ever supersede Christianity, their results are as certain as they are abhorrent and undesirable.

Human happiness depends in no inconsiderable degree upon the state of mind with which we view the events, and are enabled to meet and bear the trials of life. And that state of mind will be greatly affected by our perception of the nature of the causes and final consequences to which every apparent evil tends. Thus, it is not to be supposed, that a man would submit to the amputation of a limb with the same patience, the same fortitude, the same cheerfulness, without, as with the belief that it would prolong his life and his usefulness.—Take this expectation from him, and though he may be compelled to submit to the operation, it is at best a dogged and unnatural acquiescence—one, under which he maintains a sullen silence, or utters perpetual and unavailing complaints.

It is thus that the perception of the operations of Supreme Intelligence in every event—and, consequently, of the favorable termination of all life's various ills—or of suitable compensation for the drawbacks which they make on present comfort, inspires a very different feeling under the miseries which they impose, from that which supposes them to be the chance operations of a blind, unconscious fate, without motive or mitigation. In the former case, human miseries are borne with meekness and patience; in the latter, without resistance. In the former, with manly and becoming fortitude; in the latter, with forced and stubborn resolution. In the former, we see the power of a firm belief in revelation, and in the moral government of a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness; in the latter, the fruit of infidelity, where, whatever accident may mingle the cup of life, there is no "eye to pity," and no lenient hand to sustain the victim of care and sorrow.

Such are a few out of many examples which might be adduced, of the utter uselessness, the evil and worthlessness of infidelity. Nor is this all. While it has nothing to give, it endeavors, with wanton levity, and ferocious and persevering cruelty, to take from man the only substantial support, comfort and glory of his being. It is a species of moral libertinism, trifling with purity, and trampling upon innocence; and can be regarded with favor only at peril, or received and embraced at the price of destruction. It is a system of nega-

tions—for it has neither a God, nor religion, nor virtue; it has no good of its own, which is peculiar to itself, in possession, and none in prospect; it has no means of averting or mitigating present evils, and it would wrest from others those which they enjoy. It has no just claims to consistency or reason—none to respect, or confidence, or acceptance; and it seems only to find appropriate employment in perpetual efforts to render all others as destitute and as miserable as itself.

And this, be it remembered, is that identical infidelity which is tendered to the acceptance of the wise and ignorant, the evil and the good, as the consummation of all wisdom, consistency and truth. As the very thing—for it may not properly be called a system, which has neither difficulties to encounter, nor absurdities to answer for, nor mysteries to unravel—which is so simple, consistent and intelligible, that it commends itself to all the *unprejudiced* of all classes and all climes, as the sovereign cure of superstition, as the intellectual desideratum which merges all morality in convenience, and all theories in the experience of the senses. The hardihood and effrontery with which the reasonableness and propriety of this scheme is asserted, is only equalled by the pertinacity with which it is urged upon mankind. Could it present but one clear and undoubted instance of its ability or design to improve the minds, the morals, or the happiness of mankind, it would be so far entitled to charitable consideration. But it can not justly

claim even this poor privilege; since it practically bounds the operations of intelligence by the range of the senses, and lays a destroying hand upon the virtues and peace of the human race.

While we have no sympathy for, and no compromise with infidelity, we have no feelings of personal unkindness towards unbelievers—some at least of whom, we have every reason to think much better than their acknowledged principles. What God hath *not* joined together, may very safely be sundered, for we can conceive of no natural and legitimate affinity between infidels as men, and the theory of their adoption. They can not, therefore, excuse themselves from the consequences which their principles involve. Here they become active agents, and must be held responsible to the great and deeply interested public. To them, and to that public, is now submitted this humble attempt to vindicate the reasonableness, utility and certainty of a DIVINE REVELATION.

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